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FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD
Buying grub online, from sprouts to sauerkraut

THE NET AWARDS
Which sites will walk off with our dazzling gongs?

CUPID'S LITTLE HELPER
Make this Valentine's Day the best ever – thanks to the Web!

SHANIA TWAIN
WILL THE WORLD'S BIGGEST STARS SURVIVE THE MP3 YEARS?
MUSIC SPECIAL p62

stepbystep The pain-free guide to getting online

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial TM & © Universal Studios

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the net

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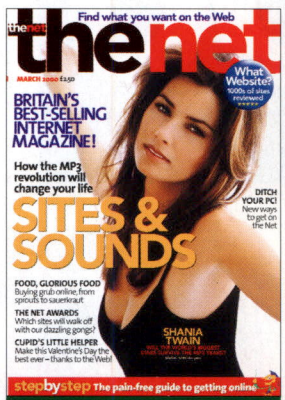


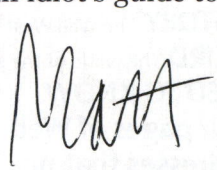
COVER PHOTOGRAPH: GEORGE HOLZ/OUTLINE

'Expect emotional scenes at leading dotcom companies'

Awards are funny old things. Soldiers come over all misty-eyed when a general pins a medal to their chests. A doting mother will preserve her child's first 'Highly Commended' essay with more care than that lavished on the Mappa Mundi. Even a Hollywood player such as lovely, slender-necked Gwyneth Paltrow can be reduced to tears when she's clutching a few dollars' worth of pewter statuary.

So expect some emotional scenes among the world's leading dotcom companies as this bumper edition of *the net* thumps onto boardroom tables. Who's scooped the prestigious 'Best Portal' award? Has ***teddington cheese.co.uk*** walked off with a 'Best Specialist E-tailer' gong? And which site do you, the reader, want to reward with a beautiful Net Awards 2000 presentation certificate, to treasure and keep forever? You'll have to turn to page 27 to find out.

Of course, some Web companies will be going home empty-handed. But before their CEOs throw themselves off the top of an expensive piece of San Francisco real estate, let's hope they find comfort elsewhere in this fine issue: an MP3 special, PC-free surfing, the online larder, an idiot's guide to Valentine's Day, not to mention the delight that is What Website. So cheer up, guys – there's always next year.



Matthew Bingham, **Editor**
matthew.bingham@haynet.com

thenetcontents

Don't leave your home page without us

AWARDS 2000

THE VERY BEST OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB

63 SITES AND SOUNDS
MP3: the format turning the music biz upside-down

From busking to upload in just one day...

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We celebrate the best of the Web

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Gasp at that marvel of design, the Spam sandal. And some other stuff...

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Essential sites for the clothing-challenged

whatwebsite? Over 35 pages of great sites

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Four pages of Web addresses that no self-respecting Net user should be caught without

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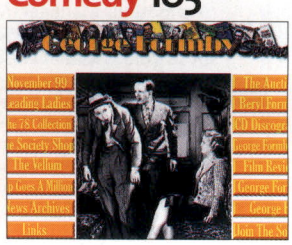

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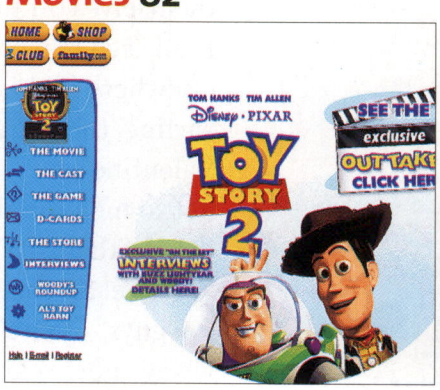

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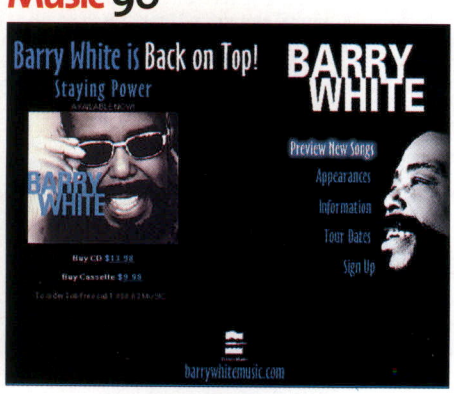

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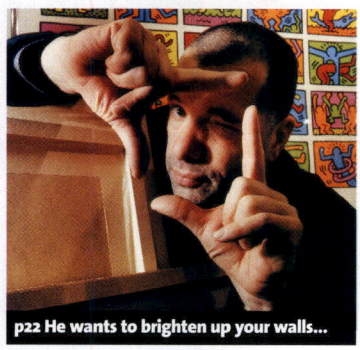

p22 He wants to brighten up your walls...

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CRACKING IDEAS ONLINE
Flogging art online, and the 17-year-old whose portal site is set to rake in £5m

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Malcolm McLaren on his surfing preferences and Mayoral pledges

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Sixteen pages' worth of fantastic Web sites will be getting a beautiful presentation certificate in the post. So who are the lucky winners?

TROLLEYS AT DAWN! 46
the net's planning a dinner party, and we're ordering our food online via two supermarket sites. Good Lord! Are we insane?

HELP ME, WEB CHERUB 52
Meet the rotund Internet love-puppy who's going to show us three ways to treat a lady to a good time this Valentine's Day. And, as it's a leap year, there's even a few tips for the girls...

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK 58
The surfing technologies threatening to make your PC redundant

MP3 SPECIAL 62
Will stars like Shania Twain still shift CDs by the boxload in a world dominated by MP3? *the net* looks at the hardware, the sites and the bands behind the format, then convenes its very own Jukebox Jury...

stepbystep

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Your easy guide to all that's on the Internet

CHOOSING AN ISP Find the ISP that's right for you with the help of our easy-to-follow guide 140

UPGRADES Don't bother buying a new computer – just plug these great bits of hardware into your old one 144

GAMING SPECIAL Pits your wits against the ultimate opponent – a real, live human being – in our multiplayer special 150

BROWSERS Everything you need to view the Net, from Explorer to Opera 154

EMAIL We show you how to mail more efficiently with power tips for home, work and mobile 156

NEWSGROUPS How to meet like-minded individuals and safely talk to them at arm's length 158

BLACKMAIL

Credit, but not where it's due

Hacker causes new concerns over the safety of online shopping

A computer hacker managed to get hold of 300,000 customer credit card details from an online music store, and attempted to blackmail the shop for the return of the numbers. The hacker, known as Maxus or Maxim, attempted to extort £60,000 out of CD Universe for the return of the card details. CD Universe refused to pay the money, with Chairman Brad Greenstreet issuing a statement saying the company would refuse to 'bow to this new breed of cyber criminal'.

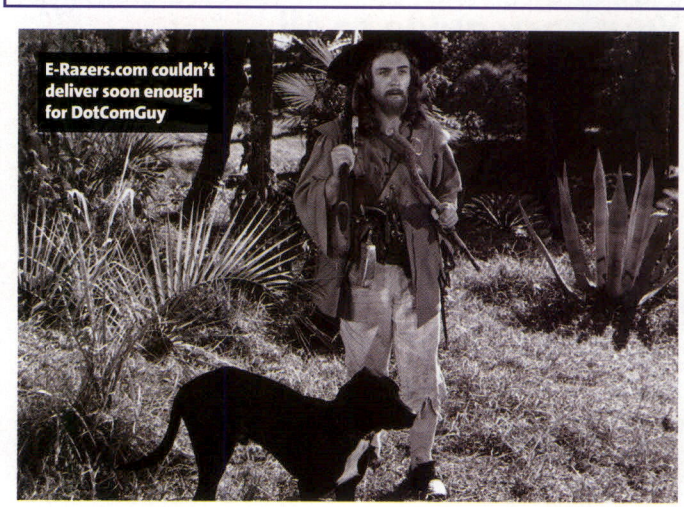
Maxim already claims to have used some cards to get money, and published around 25,000 credit card numbers on an anonymous Web site. The site was closed down, but Maxim is threatening to release more details. CD Universe customers were emailed and advised to change their site passwords and monitor their credit card transactions over the coming months.

The fraud should not affect online shoppers, as credit card companies insure users against any losses caused by fraud. Alan Stevens, editor of *Which? Online*, emphasised that it is the retailer who is liable for any loss in this situation. 'We also cover consumers losses on any site signed up to the *Which?* WebTrader code of practice,' he said.

Although a great deal of effort is made to ensure secure transactions over the Web, many e-commerce sites keep their records in plain text files, available to anyone who can hack into the computer on which they are stored. There is a good chance that this is how Maxim accessed CD Universe's records. In Britain sites are legally entitled to keep card details for six years for audit purposes. Alan Stevens told *the net* that although the WebTrader system does have guidelines for the secure storage of data, he added: 'We need to go into more detail to prevent this sort of thing happening again'.

www.cduniverse.com
www.which.net

Couldn't kick their way out of a paper bag



E-Razers.com couldn't deliver soon enough for DotComGuy

MAD YANKS

DOTCOM OFF IT

There are those that use the Internet for fun, those that use it for business and, finally, those that see it as a way of life and take it all much too seriously – and they're mainly American.

A US systems manager is changing his name to DotComGuy and moved into an empty house with nothing but a laptop and his pet cat. DotComGuy (***www.dotcomguy.com***) aims to spend an entire year within the confines of the house and garden, using the Internet for everything, including shopping and communication with his friends (he actually has some?).

DotComGuy claims he is doing is a sociological study, but the fact that he is also selling banner advertising makes you wonder if he might just have an ulterior motive. At least if he gets bored he can always scan the cat with inspiration on hand at ***www.cats-can.com.***

And while we're on the subject of sad Americans, the tiny town of Halfway (with just 345 inhabitants) recently voted whether to change the name of the town to that of an Internet company, ***Half.com***. How about Halfwit.com?

ORANGE

WAP FACTOR ONE

The new breed of Internet-enabled mobile phones is already proving a success. Net access is available through mobiles using Wireless Application Protocol (WAP), currently available via Nokia's 7110e phone, Orange, BT Cellnet and Vodaphone.

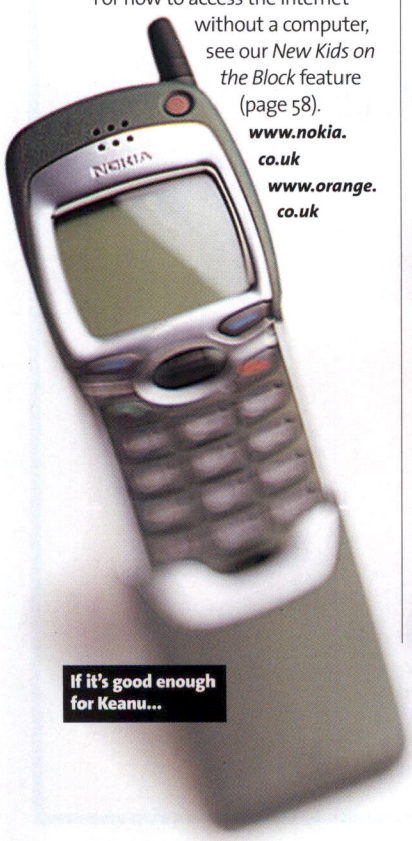
For the uninitiated, the Nokia 7110e is the phone Keanu Reeves used in last year's *The Matrix*, and

costs £129.99. Once you've got your phone, choose from a range of Orange tariffs. The Net services are free so you just pay for call time; however, at peak rates this could be expensive, so work out how often you're likely to use it and choose your tariff accordingly. Net services available via WAP include news, sports and business listings. More services are expected over coming months, such as last-minute deals on holidays or flights.

For how to access the Internet without a computer, see our *New Kids on the Block* feature (page 58).

www.nokia.co.uk

www.orange.co.uk



If it's good enough for Keanu...

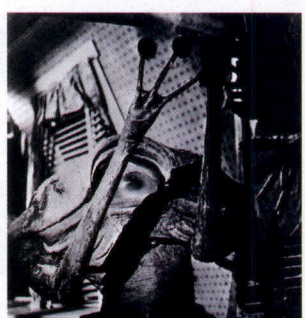
KNOWHOW

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT...?

No.8: Y2K madness

So the new millennium's here. Why hasn't the Earth stopped turning?
Because the Bug obviously wasn't as dangerous as we were led to believe. And to anyone who tells you different, ask them why some countries spent no money on Y2K, and yet nothing happened to them.

What was the problem anyway?
It revolved around the fact that boffins were too lazy to include a four figure year in the date of computer systems when they were first created. Thus, aircraft would be likely to fall out the sky when we hit 00, because they thought it was the year 1900, and realised they hadn't been invented yet. That sort of thing.



Y2k bug: hopes 2999 will be his year

But that didn't happen?
Life's still the same, isn't it? Crap boy bands still churn out number one hits, everyone still hates Man United, and Tony Blair still walks around with that inane grin on his mug.

So it's the biggest anti-climax since the eclipse?
Pretty much. Except that the eclipse didn't consume vast amounts of public cash for something that didn't happen. Britain spent more per head than any other country to 'prevent' the Bug, so that's more of our money well spent.

So we should be feeling a bit stupid?
Not as stupid as some of the supposed experts who predicted the end of the world. According to Bruce Webster in his *Y2K Survival Guide*: 'Unemployment rises... interruptions in utilities... common use of heaters... increase in layoffs... some neighbourhoods form purchasing associations... (probability of this outcome or worse) is 65 percent.' Now he *should* feel stupid.

Did it have any effect whatsoever?
According to the Year 2000 Research Centre, the bug caused a whopping 67 significant computer failures across the world. Oh, and it affected a few Web sites as well. Have a look at ***kwikware.com/y2k mistakes/big list.htm*** to see some of them.

So, basically, the whole thing resembled a hurricane warning for a breath of fresh air.

WHAT'S HOT & WHAT'S NOT

IN & OUT

WOODY AND BUZZ LIGHTYEAR
disney.go.com/worldsofdisney/toystory2
CUPID
www.my-valentine.com
PANCAKES
www.nedski.demon.co.uk
LEAP YEARS
www.emailman.com/leapday/

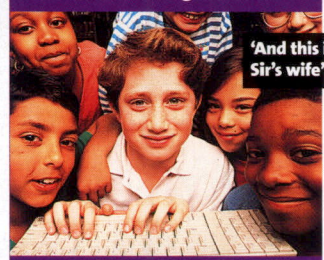
MILLENNIUM BUG
www.y2k.com
SAILING
www.americascup.org
THE MILLENNIUM
www.notthemillennium.co.uk
OVERPAID SUPERMODELS
www.londonfashionweek.co.uk

News Bytes

BITS IN BRIEF

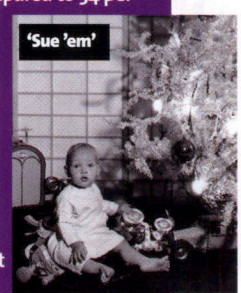
WOMEN MORE HI-TECH THAN MEN

Woman and children are more at home with modern technology than men, according to a new



'And this is Sir's wife'

survey. Only 8 percent of women weren't confident using modern technology, while 21 percent of men felt that way. And 67 percent of 11 to 16-year-olds are confident using computers, compared to 34 per-cent of adults.



'Sue 'em'

BLUE CHRISTMAS

Toysrus.com is being sued by an online shopper in the United States, who claims that the company accepted orders for Christmas knowing that it wouldn't be able to deliver them in time. The woman ordered toys on 7 December specifying six-day delivery, but the toys hadn't appeared by the big day.

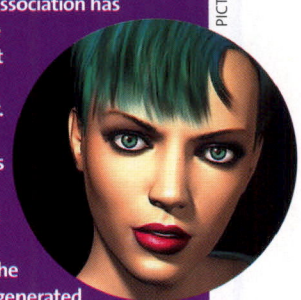
DRIVING ON THE SUPERHIGHWAY

Internet access is now available from behind the wheel of your car. Ford cars will begin to feature the latest advances in wireless technology, which will connect drivers to their homes or offices.

AND FINALLY...

The Press Association has created the world's first virtual newscaster. Trevor McDonald's online alter-ego is named Ananova; the computer-generated newsreader will read out bulletins as the news happens. The service is due to launch around Easter.

www.ananova.com



PICTURES: TCL STOCK DIRECTORY, MOVIESTORE, KOBAL, CORBIS

The UK's No1 online betting service

BLUE SQ.

www.bluesq.com

Over 18s only. Rules apply – available on request at www.bluesq.com

Celebrity bookmarks

No8 Jennifer Lopez

Match.com

www.match.com

Now that she's dumped that Puff she'll be looking for a new love, so the online matchmaking service will be superb. And just imagine how many new male members they would get – we're going to fill in our forms now. D'ya reckon she'd go for an Internet journalist?

Puff Daddy

www.puffdaddy.com

We all miss our ex-partners occasionally, but we recommend this is as near as she gets to him. Rumours that he's doing a cover version of *Jailhouse Rock* are unfounded.

Yahoo Weather Forecast

weather.yahoo.com

The lass never seems to have many clothes on. Not that we're complaining, but we'd hate to see her catch a chill so maybe she'd better check the forecast.

Uninvited Guest

www.uninvitedguest.com

Judging by New Year's Eve this should be her favourite band – Jennifer gatecrashed a party held by Donatella Versace, and Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow gave her the cold shoulder because she'd slated them in a recent magazine article. Miaow.

Water pistols

www.water pistols.com

Although we know she had nothing to do with Mr Daddy's arrest re a gun, she should stick to these.

Perhaps try a sugar daddy next time?

SPOKEN WORD

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

Top quotes from celebrity Net chats

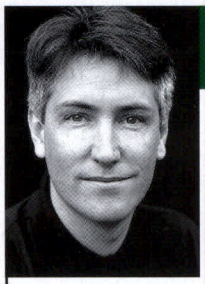
'Sir Cliff – we'd love to remix him.'

ARTFUL DODGER, THE DJS, REVEAL A BIZARRE AMBITION AT **www.chat.beeb.com**

'I drank absinthe and ran about naked in the country.' *BIC, FROM DARKSTAR, EXPLAINS HOW HE SPENT THE MILLENNIUM AT* **www.chat.beeb.com**

'It would've been a lot quicker if we hadn't wasted so much time smoking and w*ing.'** *THE BLUETONES EXPLAIN WHY THEIR ALBUM TOOK RATHER LONGER THAN EXPECTED ON AOL*

Bluetones: bunch of t***ers?



JON CASIMIR

WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

When will I, will I be famous?

I'm gullible. I concede that. I spent my childhood serenely unaware that The Village People were, you know, friends of Dorothy. I thought Kurt Cobain had been born with small pupils. I didn't blink when *Home And Away* changed the actress who played Pippa. And I'm not convinced the US President has sex with interns (surely he can pull a better class of groupie?).

But the line has to be drawn somewhere. And I draw it twice. First, how goddamn stupid do you have to be to not see the 'twist' coming in *The Sixth Sense*? Second, does anyone really think that the Internet can make them famous?

Leaving aside the former, the answer to the latter is a firm yes, a truth borne out by the existence of I Wanna Be Famous (***www.iwannabefamous.com***), a site which has been attempting to confer celebrity on Joe Public since 21 October, 1999.

IWBF features 'one ordinary person, like you' every day. Just fill in the form, explain your burning need to be known and email a photo of yourself or your act.

Today's famous person is Charlotte. Her picture adorns the centre of the site's home page. She explains: 'I wanna be famous because my whole life I wanted to be a model and be famous but never really got a chance!'

'I'm gullible. I thought Kurt Cobain was born with small pupils'

Now, though my New Year's resolutions included 'Stop being such an asshole', I have to say no offence Charlotte, but there's a reason why that chance never came.

On a more positive note, the funniest part of the site is its 'heritage' list, which includes links to pics of all the would-be stars, alongside their motivations, which make fine reading.

'I wanna be famous because I can make people happy by sharing my beauty with the world!'

I wanna say two things about this site. 1. The Web is a lousy promotional medium – you have a better chance of becoming famous by sticking a blurry photo of yourself to the nearest bus stop.

2. Famous is not what it's cracked up to be. I was famous in the 70s (I was the white kid on TV's *Good Times*) and it blew. Still, it was better than my stint in The Village People. The less said about that...

Famous for far too long

PICTURES: RETNA

talk
surf
talk
surf
talk
surf

SITE WATCH

NEW AND APPROVED

A quick round-up of the best new sites on the Web

BOB THE BUILDER

www.bobthebuilder.org

Apparently Bob the Builder is a new favourite among the kids and thus the best advert for the building trade since *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. This is a great interactive site that will keep the kids occupied for ages. And, if we're honest, the 'clearing the rubbish' game will keep most adults out of mischief as well.

URNET

www.urnet.co.uk

An entertainment, club and lifestyle guide aimed at the hip and happening of our world. It's chock-full of info on everything from music and films to careers. If all that's a bit hectic, you can chill out in the chat rooms. There are competitions to enter and an online personal organiser.

YOUTH FM

www.youthfm.co.uk

A radio station for young people by young people. It has such a wonderful ring to it, doesn't it? The new station began broadcasting at the start of the year and you can listen to it over the Net and access info about them as well.

CRÈME EGG

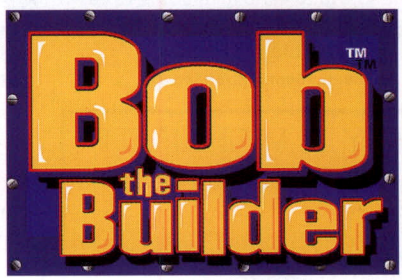
www.cremeegg.co.uk

Excellent collection of Shockwave games is the highlight and, as they're offering £10,000 in prize money to the very best players, you've got a great excuse to spend hours online playing them. Watch out also for the Creme Egg saga – surely a defining moment in the history of animation.

SURFONTHESAFESIDE

www.surfonthesafeside.com

A new service that offers filtering software for Web access to prevent kids accessing unsavoury content. Unlike many such filters that work by banning certain words or phrases, this one claims to review all suspect sites and then ban offensive material. It currently has nine million banned sites.



VOYEURISM

WEBCAMS OF THE MONTH

LIVE FROM LORDS

www.lords.org/mcc/camview/

We appreciate the cricket season hasn't started yet, but it occurred to us that with the capitulation (a word synonymous with the phrase 'England Test cricket scorecard') of the England cricket team, come the summer, this will almost be like watching a Test match live. At a rough guess, the picture is updated at about the same rate as England's wickets fall. And if you take a look now when there's nothing going on, you'll get a sneak preview of the fourth and fifth day of the Test match.

A bridge, more entertaining than cricket

SYDNEY ON VIEW

www.viewsydney.com.au

If the winter weather is getting you down and you'd like to daydream about sunny climes and wonderful scenery, then take a look at a Webcam down under. This site offers several cameras situated around the Sydney Harbour, with views of the harbour bridge and Opera House. You can even take control of the cameras and change the angle to look at what you want. It may just depress you even more but at least it might bring a little bit of summer sunshine into your life.

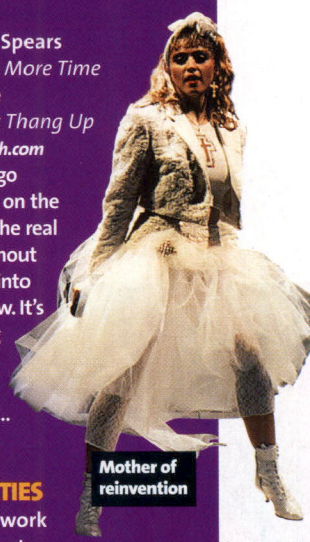
Net Charts 5

THE WEB'S FAVOURITES

REQUESTED MUSIC VIDEOS

1 Britney Spears
(You Drive Me) Crazy
2 Britney Spears
Sometimes – LAUNCH Live Performance
3 Madonna
Vogue
4 Britney Spears
Baby One More Time
5 Juvenile
Back That Thang Up
www.launch.com

You can't go anywhere on the Net or in the real world without bumping into Spears now. It's all getting to be a little bit too much...



Mother of reinvention

WEB PROPERTIES

1 AOL network
www.aol.co.uk
2 Yahoo! sites
www.yahoo.com
3 Microsoft sites
www.microsoft.com
4 Lycos
www.lycos.com
5 Go Network
www.go.com
www.mediametrix.com

FILMS OF ALL TIME

1 *The Godfather*
2 *American Beauty*

'You wanna swim in concrete, too?'

3 *Schindler's List*
4 *The Shawshank Redemption*
5 *Casablanca*
www.imdb.com

It's nice to see a chart like this with no Star Wars films. *American Beauty* is yet to stand the test of time but the others are set to become – or are already – classics.

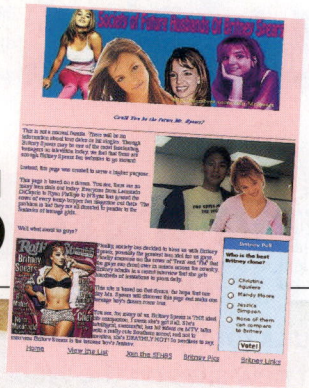
FINANCIAL WEB SITES

1 Online share dealing
2 Personal loans
3 Market prices and rates
4 Credit cards
5 Fund managers
www.find.co.uk

PICTURES: RETNA, MOVIESTORE COLLECTION

THE BEST, THE WORST AND THE WEIRDEST STUFF ON THE WEB

HEROES & ZEROS

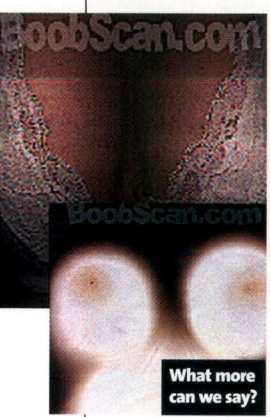


BEST CLONE

FLASHING YOUR BOOBS

Remember the Catscan site we featured in issue two, consisting of loads of pictures of cats in computer scanners? Well, someone has gone one better; now it's not cats, but boobs. Yes, BoobScan.com is requesting you get topless, scan your breasts and send the results to the site. And (so there's no accusations of sexism) there's even a section for men's breasts. Viewers vote for their fave pair, which then win the Boobscan Of The Month Award. At least there can be no complaints of cruelty to animals this time.

www.boobscan.com



What more can we say?

PICTURES: RETNA

SADDEST COLLECTION OF INDIVIDUALS

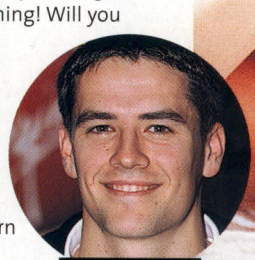
WHO'LL WED BRITNEY?

It's bad enough that people like her music, but now there's a Web site for people who want to marry her. It's that annoying Britney Spears girl once more, and the site in question is the Society for Future Husbands of Britney Spears. If you see Ms Spears as your future bride, just sign up – because, of course, the little madam is bound to look at the site and choose one of the sad losers to bestow her undying love and fortune on. The mindset of those signing up is encapsulated in just two examples. One lad passes himself off as 19-year-old Michael Owen from Liverpool, and his chat-up line is: 'Hello sweethard!!!How do you do??I hope you fell good!!! love you!!! want to ask you something! Will you marrie me i hope so.'

If she doesn't fancy such a high profile Becks and Posh-esque relationship, then how about Jonas from Stockholm, who says: 'My glory is my pride a would love to take you for a romantik week end trip to karibia im going to easrn 5 miljons a day in the future.'?

How could she resist?

members.xoom.com/MrSpears/



Owen: obviously desperate

Spears: Leap Year opportunist

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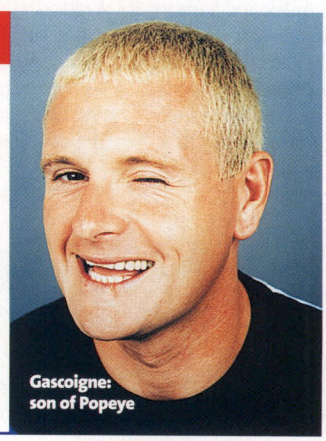
Becks to the future

Among predictions for the year ahead, few can be guaranteed to cause more smirks than Football 365's efforts to predict the movers and shakers of football. It contains digs at Beckham, Man United and the obligatory snipe at Gascoigne: rumours he's about to join a top American outfit are scotched when it's revealed he can't fit in the Ronald McDonald suit.

www.football365.co.uk/content/fun/funfeatures/fw_funfeatur_273504.htm



Gascoigne: son of Popeye

DAFTEST DATABASE

A BIT OF MONKEY BUSINESS

The Net is full of sites that make you wonder whether the people who set them up haven't got better things to do. The Index of Famous Monkeys is one such with its huge database of, well, famous monkeys. But you can't complain about the effort that has gone in: Mickey Dolenz of The Monkees makes an appearance, and it extends to modern times with Mr Bananas from *The Simpsons*. We can't help thinking there's one glaring omission, though – what about our own Mail Monkey, star of letters page and Webcams? Surely he's worth a mention...

www.evl.uic.edu/caylor/MONKEY/famous monkeys

Monkees: not hairy

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www.blackstar.co.uk

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YOUR MONTH ON THE WEB

Buzz's new high-starch diet had Mr Potato Head worried

11 Quick on the draw

FRI

***Toy Story 2* released, February 11**

Such was the success of *Toy Story*, it's hardly surprising that Pixar's sequel doesn't stray too far from the safe path of the original: Tom Hanks and Tim Allen are back doing the voices, as the animated playthings set out to rescue Woody from the clutches of a toy collector. Some pundits are claiming it'll do better than last year's *Star Wars* film – it took $80m in its first five days in the States. To infinity and *way* beyond...

disney.go.com/worldsofdisney/toystory2/index_html.html

DEAR DIARY

FEB 2 WEDNESDAY
Birthday: Farrah Fawcett, 54 ***www.charlies angels.com***

Birthday: David Jason, 60 ***www.onlyfools.net***

3 THURS
Birthday: Darren Peacock, 32 ***www.footballnews.co.uk***

Birthday: Roy 'Chubby' Brown, 49 ***www.dave-edwards.com***

4 FRI
Birthday: Alice Cooper, 52 ***www.alicecooper show.com***

Birthday: Sir Norman Wisdom, 85 ***www.flashbacks.freeserve.co.uk***

5 SAT
England v Ireland – Six Nations European Cup rugby ***www.rugbynews.com***

William Burroughs born 1914 ***www.bigtable.com***

6 SUN
B&H Masters snooker begins, Wembley ***www.snookernet.com***

Birthday: Axl Rose, 38 ***www.students.uiuc.edu/~t-gray/axl.html***

12 SAT
Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809 ***members.aol.com/RVSNorton/Lincoln2.html***

Birthday: Christina Ricci, 20 ***www.christinaricci.co.uk***

13 SUN
Thomas Crapper pioneered the flushing toilet, 1863 ***www.plumbingmart.com/pmthomas.html***

Birthday: Robbie Williams, 26 ***www.robbiewilliams.co.uk***

14 MON
St Valentine's Day ***www.my-valentine.com***

Birthday: Kevin Keegan, 49 ***www.england-fc.co.uk***

15 TUES
72nd Academy Award nominees announced ***www.oscar.com***

Birthday: Matt Groening, 46 ***www.snpp.com***

16 WED
Birthday: **Ice-T**, 42 ***www.mcicet.com***

22 TUES
Birthday: **Bruce Forsyth**, 72 ***www.bangor.ac.uk/~tcu13c/brucie.htm***

23 WED
Anthony Burgess born 1917 ***www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/3111/aco.htm***

Andy Warhol died 1987 ***www.clpgh.org/warhol/***

24 THURS
Birthday: Dennis Waterman, 52 ***www.mindphaser.de/minder/***

Birthday: Alain Prost, 55 ***www.itv-f1.com***

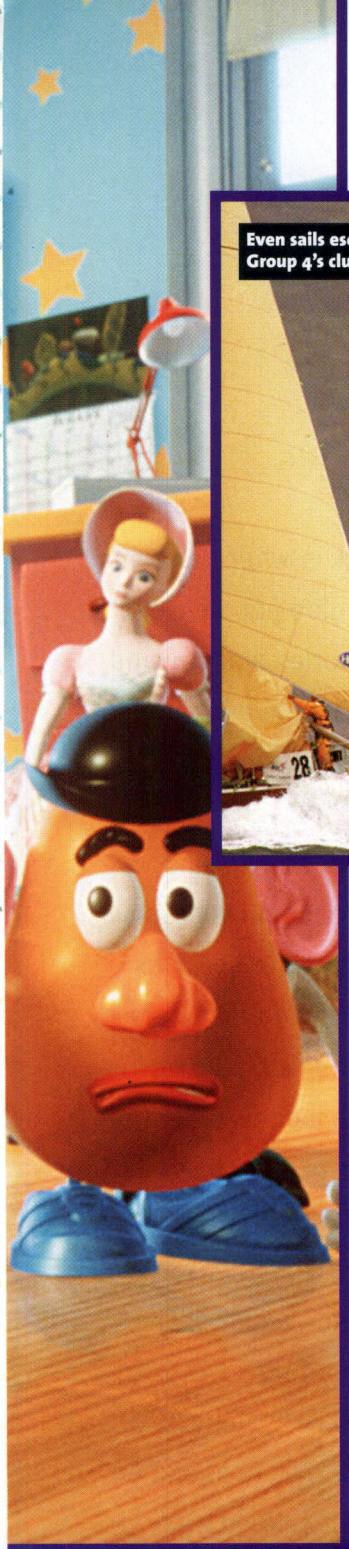
25 FRI
The Green Mile released ***www.thegreenmile.com***

Birthday: George Harrison, 57 ***www.ElectricEarl.com/BlueJay.html***

26 SAT
European Basketball Championship semi-finals Hungary v England ***www.fiba.co.uk***

Birthday: Michael Bolton, 47 ***www.michaelbolton-fanclub.com***

PICTURES: EMPICS, PA, RETNA



Even sails escape Group 4's clutches

14 MON We are sailing...

America's Cup, Auckland, February 14

Most people's experience of sailing begins and ends with *Howard's Way* – so learn something by following the America's Cup, this year being held in Auckland. Reigning champs Team New Zealand will take on the might of either AmericaOne or the Italian Prada team, depending on who wins the qualifying race that takes place shortly before the event. ***www.americascup.org***

13 SUN A model existence

London Fashion Week, February 13-17

Fashion was always an industry dominated by the French and Italians – but London Fashion Week has helped place Britain firmly on the style map, giving our designers the chance to have their collections displayed in front of the people who matter. This year's extravaganza takes place at the Natural History Museum. ***www.londonfashionweek.co.uk***

Fashion: happy

7 MON *Pinocchio* first released 1940 ***www.disneymania.org/pinochoi.htm***

Birthday: Garth Brooks, 38 ***www.planetgarth.com***

8 TUES Shergar disappeared in 1983 ***racingtips.co.uk***

Birthday: Nick Nolte, 60 ***hometown.aol.com/wienerdox/page/index.htm***

9 WED Birthday: Carole King, 58 ***members.home.net/caroleking/***

Birthday: Holly Johnson, 40 ***www.fgth.cjb.net***

10 THURS Birthday: **Laura Dern**, 33 ***www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Park/4120/***

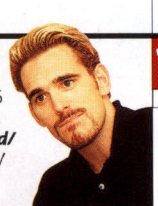
11 FRI *The Beach* released ***www.leonardo-dicaprio.com***

Birthday: Sheryl Crow, 37 ***www.sherylcrow.com***

17 THURS *Ordinary Decent Criminal* released ***www.spacey.com***

Birthday: Michael Jordan, 37 ***jordan.sportsline.com***

18 FRI Birthday: **Matt Dillon**, 36 ***www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Academy/7876/***



19 SAT Jeff Daniels born 1955 ***members.xoom.com/dumbandumber/***

FA Cup quarter-finals ***www.fifa.com***

20 SUN Pet Shop Boys' first gig for 10 years, Wembley ***www.petshopboys.co.uk***

Birthday: Cindy Crawford, 34 ***www.cindy.com***

21 MON Birthday: Jilly Cooper, 63 ***billington.simplenet.com/jilly.html***

Nina Simone born 1933 ***www.boscarol.com/nina/***

27 SUN Worthington Cup Final, Wembley ***www.football365.co.uk***

Birthday: Chelsea Clinton, 20 ***www.clark.net/pub/cosmic/chelsea7.html***

28 MON Oasis' new album released ***www.oasisinet.com***

Birthday: Mario Andretti, 60 ***www.andretti.com***

29 TUES First Playboy Club opened in Chicago, 1960 ***www.chicago.il.org***

Chelsea v Marseille, Champions League ***www.uefa.com/UCL/***

MAR 1 WEDNESDAY St David's Day ***www.wales.org.uk***

Birthday: Roger Daltrey, 55 ***www.rogerdaltrey.net***

2 THURS Birthday: Jon Bon Jovi, 38 ***www.bonjovi.com***

Birthday: Lou Reed, 57 ***www.loureed.org***

WORDS: SARAH WAKELY/CHRIS BROCK; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION/DISNEY/PIXAR

eBay.co.uk is where all kinds of like-minded people meet to swap stories and buy and sell just about everything under the sun.

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READER'S LETTER OF THE MONTH

Dear thenet,

I found the article about Internet banking (January) very interesting and informative. I have been online for over three years now, and follow the development of the Web and the services it offers avidly.

However, as an Apple Mac user, I note that not all online banks – my own included – support a Mac facility. When will these people realise that not everyone owns a PC, and that they're missing out on a large number taking up this option for their banking? If they want us to run our bank accounts for them, they could at least provide the proper service to do this.

Roger Ward
rogerward@elsworths.clara.co.uk

How to beat the Monday queues

Dear thenet,

If nine out of ten browsers prefer Cat Deeley (January), is that because the vast majority of Internet users are discerning macho studs with a healthy interest in the opposite sex? Or could they alternatively be categorised as sad-cases who experience life vicariously through telephone lines?

Stuart Kirk-Spriggs
Stuart@interositor.freeserve.co.uk

Dear thenet,

I've found your magazine a fantastic source of information – now I'm inspired to expand my family business onto the Web. How to do this is a mystery... I'd appreciate your help.

Adam Carter
via email

*The first step is to find an e-commerce-friendly ISP, probably a paid-for service as they offer a better level of support. NetBasics (**www.netbasics.com**) will match your needs to an ISP for a small fee; look for one with secure server facilities, help with site design and lots of advice. A good ISP will take care of the technical side of things for you, but you'll need to register your own domain name with an independent company.*

Dear thenet,

In your January edition you say you cannot compose email for Hotmail offline, yet this can be done. Compose in Word, then cut and paste into Hotmail, thus saving you money by staying offline. But you probably already know this...

Paul Richardson
paulrichardson@callnetuk.com

Dear thenet,

I feel compelled to write to you regarding a reader's letter in the January issue. Mr C Young wrote in regarding software to record time spent on the Net. I have a very cheap format that can be made available for monitoring Net time. The format is called 'Her Indoors', or the standard term, 'The Wife'. This is a stand-alone system that generates a process that controls all time spent online. Controlled phrases that can be given: a) 'How much longer will you be on that thing?', and b) 'Do you realise you've been online for half an hour?' I would be grateful if you could provide this information to your readers. Perhaps they could provide me with some form of virus checker that allows more Net time?

Adam Cook
adamcook@ic24.net

Dear thenet,

Having persuaded my sister to buy a PC, I'd like to help protect her children from Net nasties. We've discussed Net Nannies as one option, but I have heard there are some child-friendly ISPs. Any ideas?

Chris Hawes
chris@flav.freeserve.co.uk

Most child-friendly ISPs keep kids safe by blocking certain words, but any adult using the service will also find innocuous searches for 'Middlesex' or 'Essex' are fruitless. Net Nannies can be activated according to who uses the computer, making them more effective; any British search engine will find you a comprehensive list. Alternatively, AOL lets you set up multiple passwords for different services, so kids log on to a child-friendly service while parents have unrestricted access.

MAIL MONKEY Promoting the primate

From: mailmonkey@chimp.co.uk
Sent: Wednesday February 2, 2000
To: enquiries@thenetmag.co.uk
Subject: How Dare You?

Dear *the net*,

Another issue, another blatant piece of discrimination towards minority groups. I refer, of course, to your 'Awards Special', which featured the usual suspects but ignored the one section of society that's made more impact on the Internet than any other – primates.

How dare you overlook some of the most thrilling sites on the Web: classics such as the Index Of Famous Monkeys (***www.evl.uic.edu/caylor/monkey***), which sheds the spotlight of fame on those chimps cruelly denied stardom by the mainstream media... like myself. And that one in *The Jungle Book* – thought he knew it all, he did. In fact, forget that one. But what about Cybermonkey (***www.cybermonkey.com***)? Or my favourite band of the moment, Monkeys With Handguns (***www.mwhg.com***)?

It's not like we primates haven't achieved anything of note. We've currently got a monkey as Foreign Secretary, another composing hit West End musicals, and a third reviewing television in Britain's most popular daily paper. Not to mention the trained gorillas manning the doors at nightspots every weekend.

I recently made the same point to Mo Mowlam (who helped broker the historic baboon/orangutan peace deal) when I dropped off her duty-free herbal fags I'd shipped in from Amsterdam. Terrible fuss over nothing, that marijuana business; those indignant tabloid pundits should have seen the stuff Alan Clark had in his pipe during the Thatcher years. High as a kite he was, most days.

The point is, we monkeys remain under-represented in business and light entertainment, particularly since *Noel's House Party* was axed. My suggestion? After Clinton's shameless photo opportunities with the White House cat, why not fix Blair up with a primate on a string? Fun for all the family, particularly with a nipper on the way. I'd suggest it to him in person, but the police insist on closing the Downing Street gates whenever I try to drive in for a cuppa. Someone'll get hurt if they carry on like that...

Hope to see a marked improvement soon,

Mail monkey

www.monkeymaddness.com
www.monkeymatters.com
www.orangutan.org.uk
www.primates.net

PHOTO: KOBAL

Business | Education | Entertainment | Money | Motoring | News | Shopping | Sport | Travel

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THE SHOWS THAT WON'T DIE
Cult TV comedies, lousy sci-fi series – they're all still alive on the Web

UNCORKED!
The quaffable world of wine online

Will surf for food

There's tonnes of stuff for nowt on the Net. But can a man survive on freebies alone?

KOBAL COLLECTION

April issue on sale Wednesday March 8

SHOCKWAVE.COM

WHAT IS IT? Portal for animation, games and links involving Shockwave and Flash.
LAUNCHED 1999.
TRAFFIC Seven million visitors within the first four months; 60,000 new registered users each day.
BASE 600 Townsend Street, San Francisco, California 94103; no British base yet.
KEY FEATURES Shockwave games, contributions from recognised artists, download centre for applications, showcase cartoons, links, corporate information.

'We're on a mission from God – He didn't intend the Web to be a static experience'

SHOCK TROOPER

No8 SHOCKWAVE
www.shockwave.com

You might recognise the name Stan Lee. In fact, chances are you spent your childhood with him, if you were interested in the likes of Spiderman, X-Men and the Incredible Hulk. Lee was the creator of some of the most innovative, memorable and technically-proficient comic strips of all time.

A couple of months ago, Lee announced he had signed a deal with shockwave.com to put all his new content exclusively online. Trey Parker and Matt Stone, creators of *South Park*, soon followed suit. While these announcements went largely unnoticed outside the insular Web community, they had far-reaching implications – the Internet has now overtaken paper and ink as the medium for top artists. Lee and co have scrapped the drawing board for their PCs. And the site they've chosen for their animation is at the centre of it all.

Everyone knows Shockwave: it's that application buried on your hard drive that lets hamsters dance, or adds dynamic visuals to dull sites. Today, it's virtually impossible to enjoy a surf without it, but the technology, people and vision behind this cyberworld-changing concept are shrouded in mystery.

The Shockwave application itself was launched by Web development company Macromedia in 1994, and was followed two years later by the similar (but slightly more popular) Flash. They worked by adding life to still art in much the same way as early animation software did, but were far more efficient and much easier to use.

By allowing users to download the apps for free, but charging programmers and designers to create with them, Macromedia created instant demand. Soon, all the smartest sites had to have them. And at the last count, 90 percent of surfers had Flash – a whopping 200 million people – with Shockwave not far behind. Not even Microsoft can boast such global appeal.

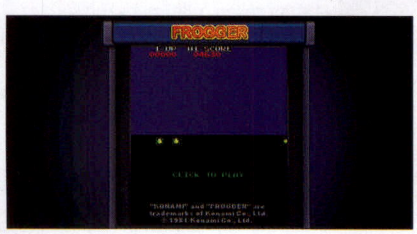
'We found there was an incredible demand,' says Shockwave CEO Rob Burgess (left). 'Flash and Shockwave let you watch animations which are comparable in quality to the things you see on Saturday morning television. We can't do *The Lion King* yet, but the first generation of the Web was just text; this has taken it to the next level. It adds value to the Web and lets developers do what they want.'

The Shockwave site started as an experiment, an opportunity to showcase the best animated work online and plug the applications that created it. Soon, however, it had taken on a life of its own. Last summer, it was launched officially as a portal for all things dancing, singing and moving. In just four months it attracted seven million visitors, with 60,000 new users registering every day. They come not just to download but to see cartoons, play Shockwave-based games or find links to sites where they can view more of the same.

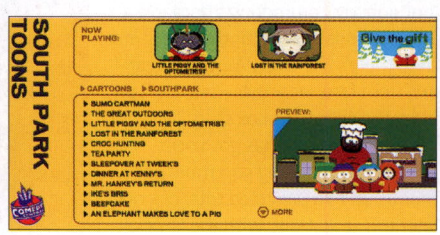
Given Shockwave's huge reach, it's surprising they haven't branched into different software or tried to exploit the brand for other Net ventures. But, says Burgess, that's now what they're about. 'When you watch BBC1, you don't want to download the whole channel first. We want to eliminate downloads. We want people to have better Web experiences.

'Soon they'll be able to play games offline, with no need to pay dial-up charges. We're currently galvanising the world's best storytellers to get them online – when that happens, the Web will be the most exciting medium in the world. We're on a mission from God, you know – He didn't intend the Web to be a static experience...'

'IT'S ALIVE!' The wonders of Shockwave animation



GAMES
A myriad of sadly-missed classic titles, including the unforgettable Centipede and the pedestrians' favourite, Frogger (above). The graphics are basic but the action is addictive.



CARTOONS
A whole section of *South Park* shorts (much of Shockwave.com's appeal comes from its proliferation of Cartman & co material), plus new cartoons from up-and-coming animators.

GREETINGS
Design and dispatch your own personalised card with moving parts. Watch the face of the one you love light up when Chef sings – just for them. A guaranteed winner.

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURE: ROBERT HOUSER

TEEN TYCOON All this and A-levels too...

JEWISHNET

www.jewishnet.co.uk

A day ill in bed needn't be wasted – not if you're Benjamin Cohen, anyway. The 17-year-old north Londoner was bed-ridden with ME when he discovered the wonders of the Web; now it could make him Britain's latest teen cyber-millionaire.

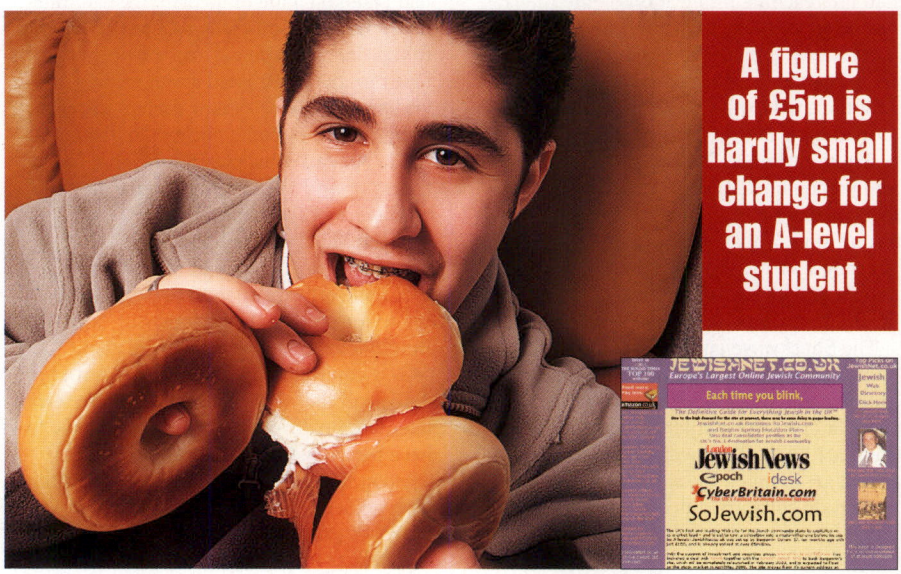
'Being isolated, it let me connect to people,' says Cohen. Thus, he hit on the idea of CyberBritain.co.uk, a country-wide business and services directory. It was nothing if not ambitious. 'Doing something for the whole of Britain was a bit much. There wasn't a Jewish portal around, so I decided to start one. I thought I might make a couple of thousand pounds a year, but never anything like this.'

JewishNet, as it became known, is now the biggest Jewish site in Europe and has been valued at as much as £50 million. A figure of £5m, says Cohen, is more realistic, though it's hardly small change for an A-level student.

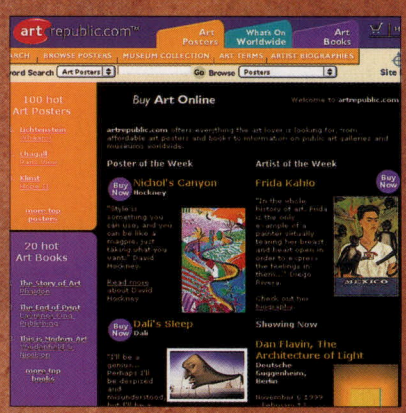
JewishNet remains modest in size but hefty in innovation. At its core is a vast list of Jewish businesses and a Synagogue directory, but there's fun, too – a dating guide called Kosher Sex, an agony aunt and an abrupt 'cyber Rabbi'. It's made Cohen a celebrity overnight – 'representing the Jewish community', as he puts it, with talk-show appearances, growing wealth and an audience with Benjamin Netanyahu, who dropped in for a chat.

Cohen's *coup de grace* will be the forthcoming relaunch of JewishNet as SoJewish.com, following a merger with the *London Jewish News* and a £5m stock market flotation. Features will include a news section, online ticketing and the cryptically-titled 'virtual synagogue'. Plus, there are plans to revamp CyberBritain.

And with the zeal of a Miss World contestant who wants to work with children, Cohen has even grander plans: an entry into politics. 'Not necessarily party politics, more just taking up important causes.' How will he fit it all in? Easily, it seems: 'You'd be surprised how little time it takes to run an Internet company. I always put my schoolwork first.'



A figure of £5m is hardly small change for an A-level student



THE ART BROKER Fancy an old master?

ARTREPUBLIC.COM

www.artrepublic.com

Back when Clive Sinclair was inventing squidgy keyboard buttons, Lawrence Alkin was in charge of 11 retail art galleries in England and Ireland. Like Clive, it's not all been plain sailing for Lawrence since – the recession hit hard – but this man saw his chance with the rise of the Internet.

'I used to be technophobic,' he reveals, 'but then five years ago my cousin said: "You ought to be on the Internet."' By January 1998, he was.

Artrepublic.com, of which Lawrence is CEO (ie, boss), is quickly becoming a haven for art lovers. It combines an ever-widening selection of posters and books for sale, with an informative guide to art events and galleries around the world.

The poster shop comes from Lawrence's 20 years in the business – and a gap in the market. 'There are a lot of art sites,' he explains, 'but nobody's promoting affordable art. There's those aiming for the upper-end, then there's the twee. We stock "real art" from famous artists – we don't go in for the chocolate-box stuff.'

Artrepublic.com has got 1,000 posters and is adding 500 more per month, up to a projected total of 5,000 later this year. Along with the 35,000 books available, that should cater for all.

And if you don't know much about art but you do know what you like, look it up in artrepublic.com's database of terminology, artist biographies and city guides. The user-friendly guide will gently point you the right way. 'We've compiled all that ourselves,' beams Lawrence. There are already in excess of 150 movements and masters discussed, and five or ten are being added each month 'until we get up to about 500'.

'We stock "real art" – we don't go in for chocolate box stuff'

This expansion is taxing for the site's staff of seven full-timers and six director/shareholders. 'We've done it on a shoestring budget,' says Lawrence. The directors aren't yet reaping rewards: 'We're not being paid at the moment, we're doing it all on faith.'

That faith will be rewarded, however, if the site maintains its momentum. Since the 1998 launch of its predecessor, onlineposters.com, sales have grown by 500 percent year-on-year.

'Some 650m people visit public art galleries each year; we know from experience that that doesn't include half the people interested in buying art.' Now they've got somewhere to go.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON/ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO

'MASTER CRAFTSMAN, MY FOOT'

Knowledge equals power – so read our guide, surf the Net and fear that terrifying species, the builder, no longer...

'WHO PUT THIS IN FOR YOU, MATE? I'LL TELL you what, this is going to take a lot longer than I thought... I'll have to send away for the parts... I'll clean up afterwards... You couldn't make us a cuppa, could you?'

The above will be all too familiar to anyone who's had to seek the services of the assorted ne'er-do-wells and convicted felons who seem to masquerade as professional builders and handymen.

Masters of procrastination and mysterious 'hidden charges', such chancers prey on the ill-informed and the gullible, mangling their cherished castles until every last penny has been wrenched from the victim's bank account. And then they scarper, leaving only a few fag ends and an astronomical bill behind them.

Surely in these techno-tastic times we can prevent such old-fashioned atrocities? Well...

THE OLD WAY vs THE WEB WAY

THE WAY IT USED TO BE

FIND A TRADESMAN

Use a professional association or a mate's recommendation – either way, you'll still get better odds on scooping the double rollover than you will on finding anyone half-decent.

GET A QUOTE

All very well in theory, but how are those unskilled in the art of the craftsman supposed to know if they're getting value for money?

CHECK THE PRICES

The parts might seem extortionately priced; stride into a builder's merchant to get the truth, however, and you'll be met by blank faces...

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

Workmen are programmed to speak only in grunts and indecipherable product names, ie: 'Uh, umm, 6.5-inch insulator valve.'

DO IT YOURSELF

Instructions always sound easy, but – as any IKEA shopper will attest – you'll end up with little more than some wood and a bunch of nails.

GO SHOPPING

Take your life (and your sanity) in your hands by braving the throngs of cardigan wearers at Homebase.

GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST

If dodgy workmen do leave your life in tatters, try writing to the local paper – and see where it gets you...

THE WAY IT IS NOW

FIND A TRADESMAN

The problem with relying on professional bodies for recommendations, of course, is you never know whether entry requires anything more stringent than a quick back-hander. The Web's full of impressively-sounding but ultimately vacant trade associations and directories, but you could try the Federation Of Master Builders (***www.fmb.org.uk***), or Plumbers UK (***www.plumbers.uk.com***), which offer consumers a right of reply and promise high standards in selecting members.

The Web lets you expose shoddy practices

GET A QUOTE

Unless you're going to take the trouble of trawling round shops checking prices yourself, questioning the veracity of a workman's quote is a hit-and-miss affair. Quotecheckers (***www.quotecheckers.co.uk***) is one of those clever e-businesses which make the extraordinarily complex infinitely simple: email them details of three quotes, pay £30 and they'll tell you which – if any – is worth pursuing. Watch Percy Plumber's face turn the colour of a welding torch when you mention that one.

CHECK THE PRICES

The conspiracy of silence that surrounds trade prices for building materials continues on the Web – the good news, though, is that if you look hard enough you might just get somewhere. The next time you're charged £20 for a three-metre overflow system push-fit, for example, have a butchers at ***www.anchor-plastics.co.uk*** and point out they only cost £1.31 each.

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

Next time you're told you need your polyurethane retouching, excuse yourself and head for your PC. Natural Handyman (***www.naturalhandyman.com***) explains DIY dilemmas in simple language, thus arming you with an artillery of information with which to bamboozle your builder. And if you can't find it there, try Mister Fixit (***www.misterfixit.com***). Alternatively, wear a hard hat indoors for an air of authority.

DO IT YOURSELF

Let the Web transform you into Inspector Gadget about the house. Sites like Hands-On-Live (***www.hands-on-line.com***) have taken the *Dairy Book Of Home Management* into the 21st century by explaining domestic tasks in unfeasible detail.

GO SHOPPING

Ah, the joys of e-commerce: no kids, no queues and, best of all, no trolleys laden with pot plants to struggle round out-of-town superstores with. Check out Homebase (***www.homebase.co.uk***) and B&Q (***www.diy.co.uk***); but for best results, try Net retailer Homefree (***www.homefree.co.uk***).

GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST

If you've been wronged by a workman, a bloody revenge involving toasting forks and screwdrivers might be tempting, but there are easier ways. The power of the Web lets you expose shoddy practices to the world through sites like ContractorNet (***www.contractornet.com***). Most regulatory bodies have a Web presence, and you'll find Trading Standards online, too. And if you can't get your cash back from a cowboy, why not seek solace in the newsgroup uk.rec.sheds and have a good potter...

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; ILLUSTRATION: RIAN HUGHES

SITES TO SEE

Seven steps to household heaven...

FEDERATION OF MASTER BUILDERS
www.fmb.org.uk
Builders who actually care what the public think of them. Wonders will never cease.

QUOTE CHECKERS
www.quotecheckers.co.uk
Because that £30 might just end up saving you a small fortune.

NATURAL HANDYMAN
www.naturalhandyman.com
Make sure the word 'mug' isn't imprinted on your forehead by learning to speak the lingo.

HANDS ON LIVE
www.hands-on-live.com
Contains the fascinating info that Brits prefer to decorate in blue, while the Norwegians plump for black.

HOMEFREE
www.homefree.co.uk
Roll up, roll up, get your cordless flashing doorchime here – just £9.99.

TRADING STANDARDS CENTRAL
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk
You can't complain about shoddy practice here, but they will tell you where to go.

IKEA
www.ikea.com
The enemy of every homeowner in Britain. Tell these evil Swedes where they can stick their flatpack wardrobes.

FINAL THOUGHT

Unless he turns up on horseback sporting a poncho and a large hat, you've got little way of knowing whether your handyman of choice will turn your home into a palace or simply devote his energies to slurping tea, using up the batteries in your radio, and haranguing passing women. At least with the Web you can arm yourself with the facts and find somewhere to complain when it all goes horribly wrong. Workmen aren't all so bad – after all, Jesus's dad was a carpenter. But then Hitler painted houses...

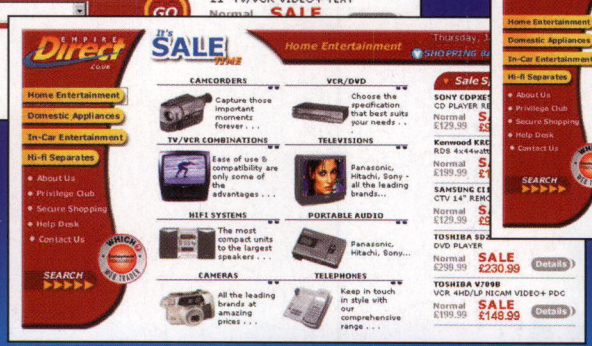
Workmen aren't all so bad – after all Jesus was a carpenter's son

THE LOWEST PRICED ELECTRICALS ON THE WEB

Save up to 30% off High Street Prices...

Now you can buy the latest top brand electrical goods cheaper on the internet with **www.empiredirect.co.uk** a ground breaking website that's changing the way we shop. It's fast, convenient, secure and easy too. Our on-line superstore is **OPEN 24 HOURS** a day throughout the year, so you can shop when it suits. So click on to **www.empiredirect.co.uk** now and discover the fantastic savings you can make. Alternatively you can freephone our national pricing centre on **0870 1263981.**

- televisions
- video recorders
- dvd players
- camcorders & digicams
- hi-fi systems and separates
- portable audio
- photographic equipment
- in-car equipment
- domestic appliances



- unbeatable savings
- fast, secure ordering
- ground breaking web-site

www.empiredirect.co.uk

one stop on-line electrical discount shopping

the net

AWARDS 2000

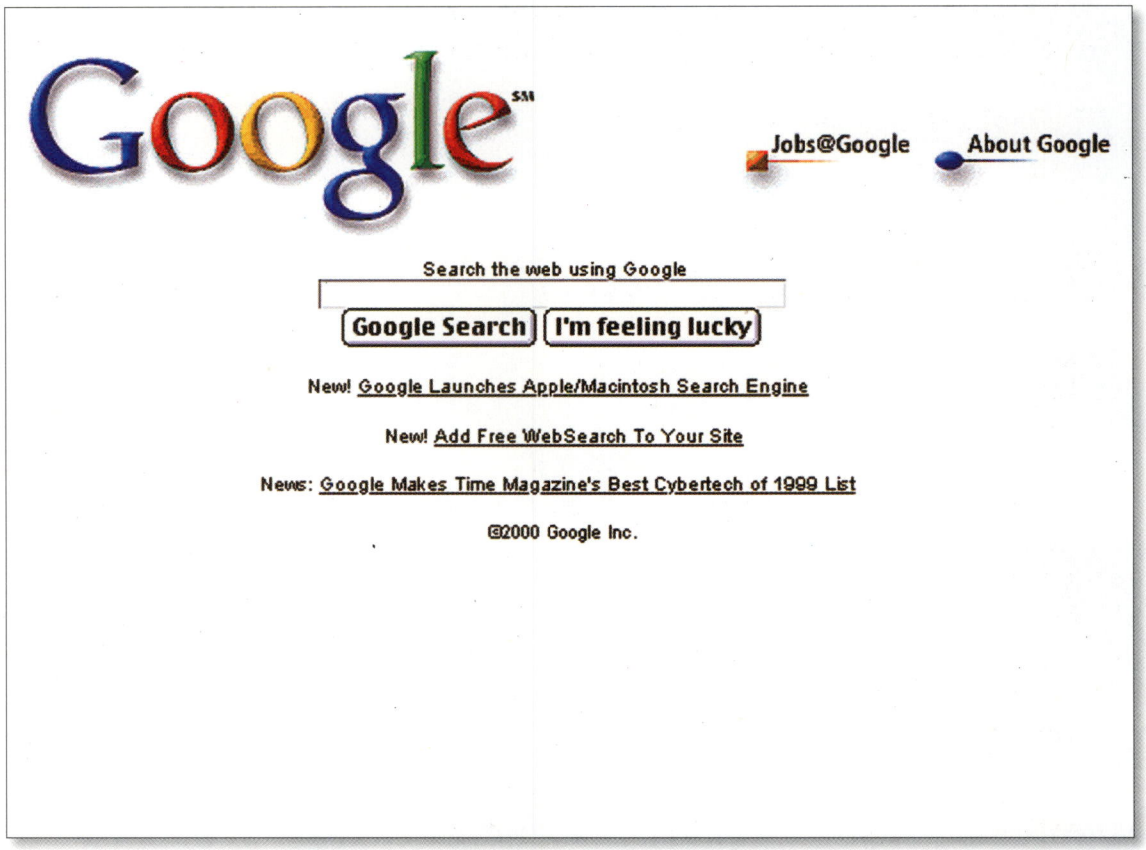
THE VERY BEST OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB

★

HERE AT *THE NET* WE SPEND ALL DAY, EVERY DAY, ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB. NOW WE'VE DISTILLED ALL THOSE HOURS OF SURFING INTO THIS, OUR FIRST AWARDS ISSUE. LIKE PANNING FOR GOLD IN A MUDDY RIVER-BED, WE'VE PLUCKED 11 ESSENTIAL SITES FROM THE CLAMOUR THAT IS THE WEB. TOGETHER WITH YOUR VERY OWN CHOICE, THE READERS' AWARD – AS VOTED FOR ON OUR WEB SITE – THEY STAND AS SHINING EXAMPLES OF INTERNET EXCELLENCE. WE SALUTE YOU!

★★★★★

BEST SEARCH ENGINE



Google

www.google.com

What do you want from a search engine? If it's a list of recommended sites under a single category, go to a behemoth like Yahoo! (see Best Portal Site). But when all you've got is a word or obscure reference, you want pure, fast searching. You want Google. There are no ads, no blurbs, no picks of the week or details of the weather in the San Francisco area – just a beautiful white title page, gleaming like virgin snow, and a query box. Lurking behind this minimalist front end is powerful software; developed by boffins at Stanford University, Google ranks its hits by the position and size of your search terms on a target page, plus the number of links to it from other 'important' sites. But who cares? All that matters is that Google consistently puts the site you want at the top of its list. And it's fast. It works.

★★★★★

BEST E-COMMERCE SITE

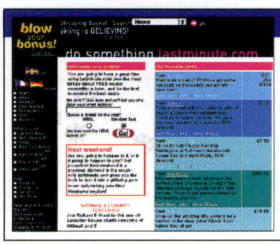
Amazon

★

www.amazon.co.uk

State-of-the-art Net retailing. An unfussy interface; quick, accurate searches; just the right amount of unrequested information (sales rankings, 'readers who bought this book also bought...'); reviews from fellow punters – the Amazon site says 'boo' to the companies responsible for those bloated, all-style-and-no-substance e-commerce sites littering the Web. As quiet and unfussy as a real bookshop, it's hard to leave without picking up a bargain or two. And who knows, they might even make a bit of money sometime soon.

★★★★★

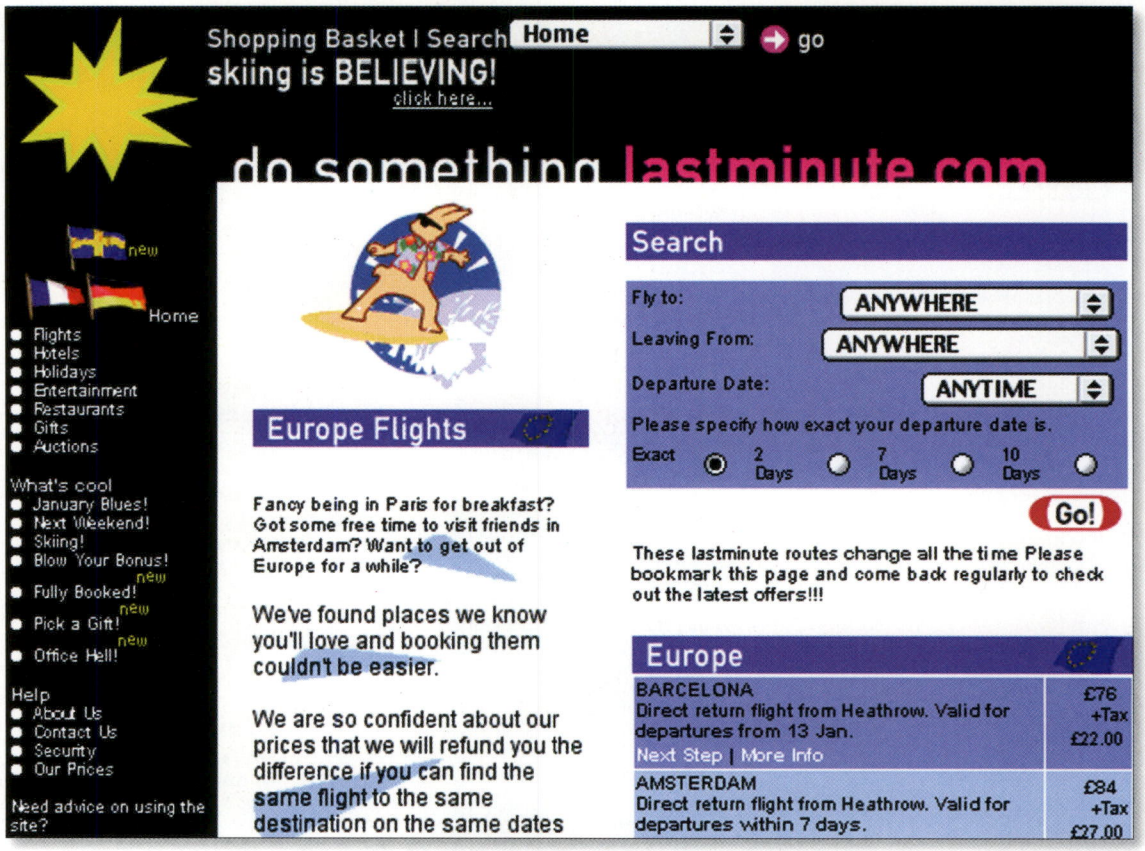


HIGHLY COMMENDED

Lastminute *www.lastminute.com*

A truly inspirational idea made (cluttered) flesh, Lastminute's front end might be scrappy but the site is perfect for birthday gifts and spontaneous holidaymaking... all on the cheap. This is the kind of thing the Internet was made for.

BRIGHTEST SPARK



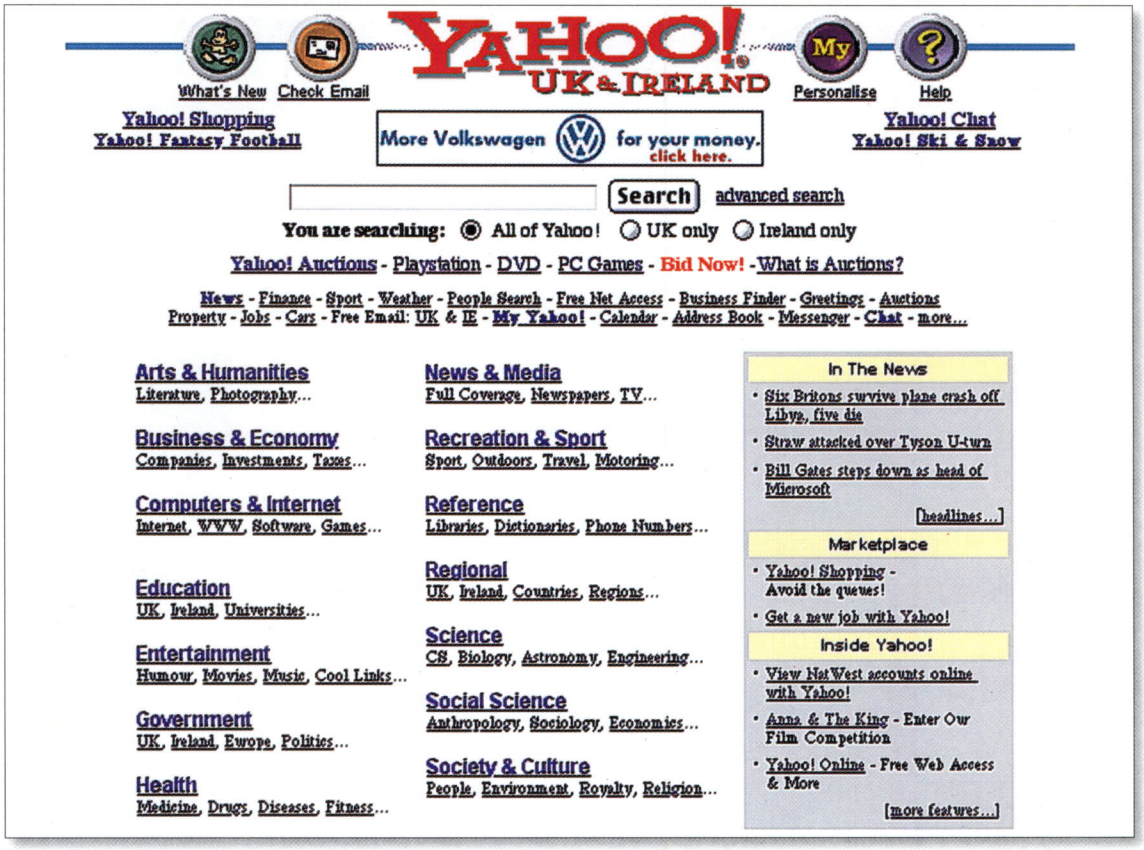
Last Minute

www.lastminute.com

Ask a member of the public to name a Web site. Chances are (if they don't say their ISP or Yahoo!), they'll answer Last Minute. The travel and gifts specialist has burst through the limits of cyberspace and entered national consciousness; moreover, it's illustrated the Net's advantages over other media. For the uninitiated, Last Minute offers holidays, travel and gifts aimed at the spontaneous consumer. If you want a weekend in Paris with flights leaving in a few hours' time, you'll find it. Tickets for tonight's big concert? No problem. Traditional travel agents and ticket agencies lack such interactivity and searchability; and with auctions, reminder services and further expansions in the pipeline, the company's future looks rosy. The first – and best – example of British Web opportunism in action.

★★★★★

BEST PORTAL



Yahoo!

★

www.yahoo.co.uk

Those companies in the first wave of Internet search engines are in danger of appearing stale when compared to sleek new predators like Google and All The Web. But Yahoo!, at least, is rising to the challenge: downplaying its search-the-entire-Internet function in favour of categorised and reviewed Web site listings, as well as chat, Web-mail, news, jobs and auctions. Okay, so it's nothing you can't find elsewhere on the Net, but Yahoo! manages to bring it all together on one (albeit drab) page – and does it bigger and better than any of its competitors. But perhaps most importantly, the UK version doesn't feel like some kind of awkward idiot cousin of the original US site – it's genuinely Brit-orientated. Make this your default home page and you won't be disappointed.

★★★★★

READERS' CHOICE

Loquax

www.loquax.co.uk

As we offered the chance of winning an MP3 player on our Web site to everyone who voted for this award, it came as no surprise that Internet competitions portal Loquax managed to squeeze out the imdb and bbc.co.uk for the prestigious Readers' Choice award. The reasons why it proved popular with you, the punters, are obvious: this no-frills site contains a wealth of goodies for Web compers, with weekly round-ups of the latest online competitions, hints, the opportunity to search the site for specific prizes, and links to competitions on more than 500 British sites. Having just celebrated its second birthday, Loquax – it means 'talk' in Latin – is currently attracting a third of a million page impressions a month, and remains resolutely independent. More fun than the *Puzzler* summer special.

★★★★★

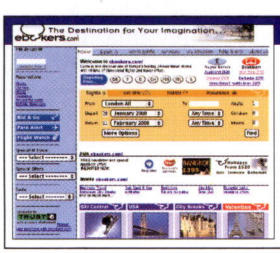
Lonely Planet

★

www.lonelyplanet.com

Lonely Planet has been the traveller's friend for over 25 years; this site shows a real appreciation of what globetrotters need to know. There's a fantastic atmosphere to the site, with substantial content provided by fellow travellers. Add to that the information *Lonely Planet* has put together over the years, and you end up with a site that can prepare you for every destination. It'll come as no surprise to find you can buy the books on the site – and if you don't feel satisfied after all that, you can access the SubWWWay to link you to the best of the rest on the Internet.

★★★★★

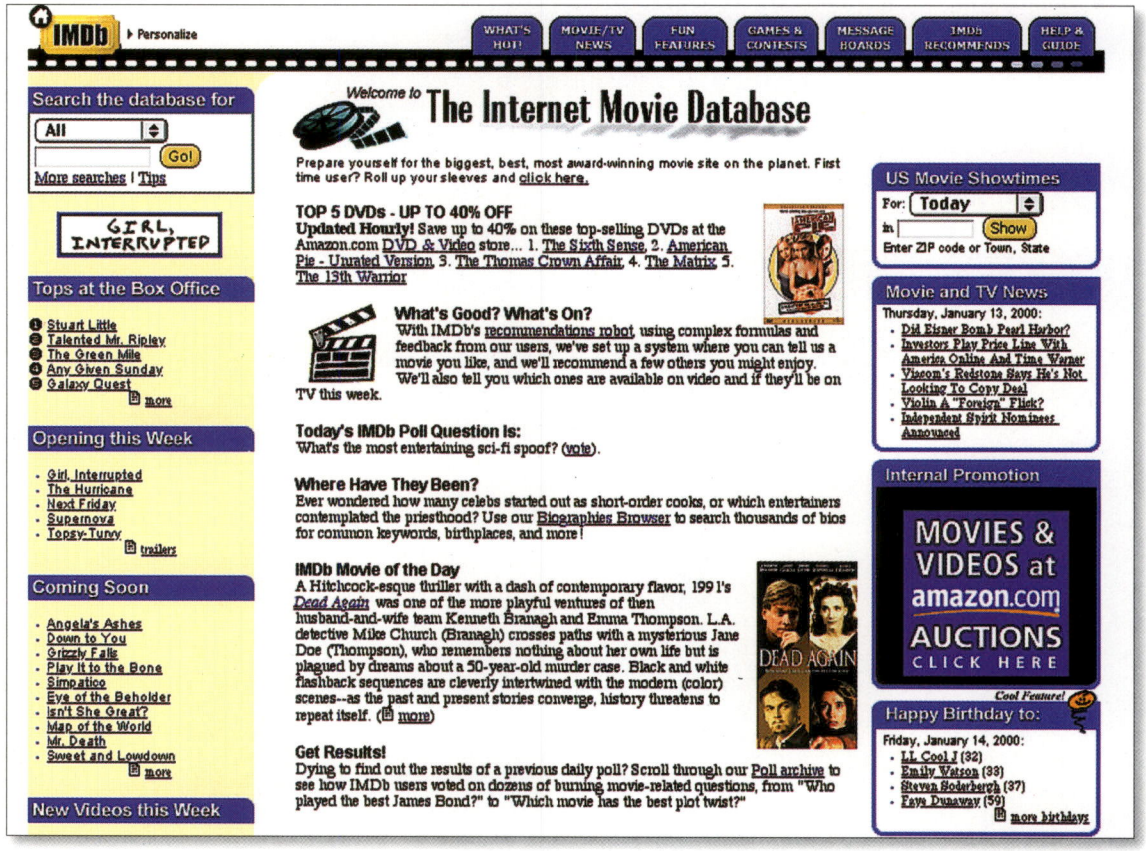


HIGHLY COMMENDED

Ebookers ***www.ebookers.com***

As good a flight and hotel booking service as you could ever hope for. Loads of cheap flights, car rental rates, hotel rooms and insurance packages, all laid out in an easy on the eye and easy-to-use format. Top marks for the fare alert service, as well.

BEST FILM/TV SITE



The Internet Movie Database

www.imdb.com

How to demonstrate the power of this monster of a site? Say you're interested in a movie like *Bringing Out The Dead*: look it up in the imdb and you get full cast and credits, US box office performance, poster, tagline and quotes, plus links to the official site and fan pages as well as newsgroup and professional reviews – 58 of the latter alone. Perhaps an actress's name catches your eye – Aida Turturro as Nurse Crupp. Click on her name and you get a comprehensive filmography (35 movies in eight years, and every one of them just a hyperlink away). One more click and you get the timings of her TV appearances this week, which takes you on to looking at obscurities like *Denise Calls Up*... and before you know it, the men from BT are taking your furniture away to pay for the phone bill. Simply amazing.

★★★★★

BEST MUSIC SITE

Q Online

www.qonline.co.uk

If you've got all 130-odd issues of *Q* neatly lined up on your living room shelf in chronological order, plus a comprehensive card index that will enable you to find any one of the magazine's 18,000 LP and gig reviews in seconds, then you won't need this site. Or a girlfriend. But everyone else should bookmark it immediately. There are a smattering of news stories on the home page, plus online versions of features in the current edition of the magazine, but it's the reviews database that proves indispensable. With just about every UK major label release of the last 11 years backed up by a near-faultless list of 'classic' albums, not to mention *Q* readers' 100 best albums (complete with audio samples) and the top 50 of '99, anyone who can't spend many hours happily browsing this site must be deaf.

★★★★★

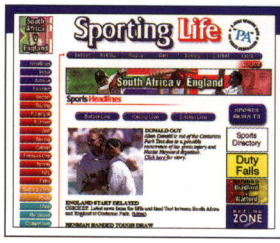
BEST SPORT SITE

CricInfo

www.cricinfo.com

Whether the sound of willow on leather dominates your life or is an irritation, you can only stand back and admire CricInfo, a site so comprehensive it renders every other cricket portal an irrelevance. In a template rival sport Webmasters should study, this site has just about every resource you could want: an interactive mag for each cricket-playing national, news, chat, score databases and a vast links page. If you're after laughs, look elsewhere (though there are few funny cricket sites), but if you want an imdb for the gentleman's game, look no further.

★★★★★



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Sporting Life ***www.sporting-life.com***

While CricInfo revels in its sheer vastness, Sporting Life is minimalism personified: every major sport has a different home page, all linked together by news, forums and an archive. Still the clued-up surfer's first choice for sport.

BEST NEWS SITE

BBC

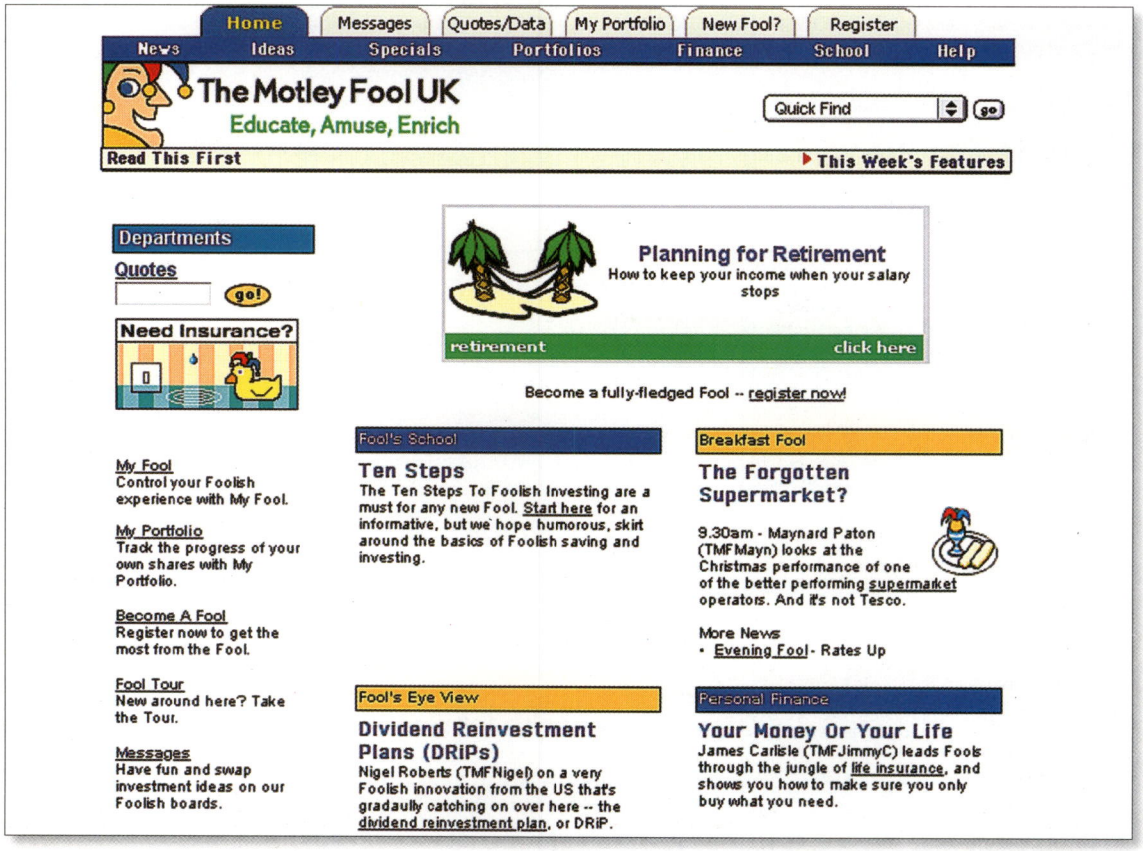
★

news.bbc.co.uk

Trust the BBC to kick those Net-only news-based upstarts into touch; while they're scrambling around for stories, Auntie's vast newsgathering resources have quietly put together a monster of a site. Blending the many facets of multimedia (live reports of breaking news and desktop tickers so you need never be uninformed) with the old-fashioned simplicity of a strong layout and exclusive online features, the site's quickly become an essential bookmark. What really puts the Beeb ahead of its challengers (among them the ITN, NewsNow and *Guardian* sites) is the speed with which it updates: headlines are flashing onto the front page within minutes. While the Web has some way to go before it can challenge television for the all-round news experience, sites like this give us a glimpse of the future.

★★★★★

BEST FINANCIAL SITE



Motley Fool

★

www.fool.co.uk

Riding the wave of share clubs, this is the perfect starting place for novice investors in the stock market. It assumes you know bugger all about shares, then sets about educating you. Once you're up and running, it will track your portfolio and allow you to sound off to fellow investors on its messageboards. There are some real professionals behind these often very funny postings, not to mention people who actually work for the companies. And most endearingly, its own 'foolishly' managed portfolio is down 0.12 percent against a rise in the FTSE All Share index of 18 percent.

★★★★★

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Hemmington Scott ***www.hemscott.com***

Once you've got even half an idea of what you're doing, trawl through this huge online resource to find the raw data you'll need to make any informed share-buying decisions. Ah, the beauty of the Web: you used to have to pay thousands for this stuff.

Shockwave

www.shockwave.com

Taking animation into the 21st century. Shockwave started off as an experiment, but has quickly taken on a life of its own – much like the cartoons it so painstakingly showcases, in fact. Shockwave itself is an application which lets you view animations in a quality comparable to television. Shockwave.com shows you the best such animations, including exclusive efforts from *South Park* creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker, as well as linking to Shockwave-inspired movies right across the Web. Whether your interest is artistic or you're simply looking for material to fill a tedious lunch hour, make it a bookmark.

★★★★★

THE BEST OF THE REST

It's not just mega-sites that deserve a prize; the weird and wonderful pick up gongs, too

BEST FAN SITE

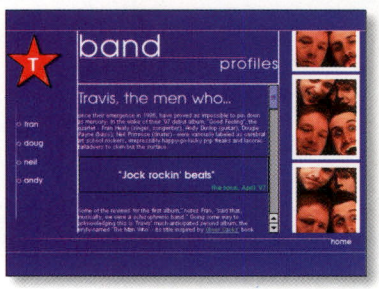
Coronation Street Visual Updates

★

www.csvu.net

Mike Plowman likes Corrie. So much so that he takes screen grabs of every episode as it appears, then splashes them on the Web with blow-by-blow plot points. You need never miss an episode again.

BEST OFFICIAL BAND SITE



Travis Online

★

www.travisonline.com

This site offers all the features you'd expect, and it's wonderfully designed. Lead singer Fran is a regular visitor to the chat forum, and the band have total control over the content. How it should be done.

BEST NEW HARDWARE

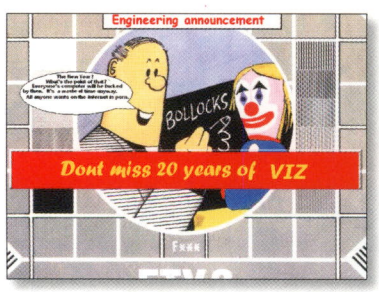
Diamond Rio 500PMP MP3 player

★

www.diamondmm.com

First into the market with the Rio 300, Diamond's latest demands to be taken seriously. MP3 is going to change the whole music business, and this little fella's leading the charge.

BEST COMEDY SITE



Viz

★

www.viz.co.uk

Even the 'Under Construction' page is funnier than most allegedly humorous Web sites, while *the net* can hardly wait for the Interactive Profanisaurus to come back online. Essential.

BEST KIDS' SITE

Disney

★

www.disney.com

Basically, will it keep a little blighter quiet for half an hour? Oh yes, my friend. Just remember to remove that Blair Witch bookmark before you plant your pride and joy in front of the PC.

BEST OFFICIAL MOVIE SITE

The Blair Witch Project

www.blairwitch.com

Proved how powerful the Web can be: this moved the goalposts for movie sites. A worthy runner-up is ***www.starwars.com***: a near-perfect example of how the Net caters for fans even when there's no movie playing.

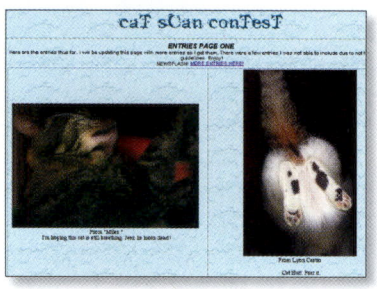
BEST UNOFFICIAL MOVIE SITE

The Force

theforce.net

You might have noticed a minor fuss over a film called *The Phantom Menace*; much of it began here. The Force scooped papers, TV and even the official site for *Star Wars* exclusives. A shining example of a film site.

WEIRDEST SITE



Cat-Scan

www.cat-scan.com

Inspirational – makes you want to grab the nearest moggie and grind its furry cat-food-smeared little face into your scanner. Just don't forget to close your eyes, Tiddles...

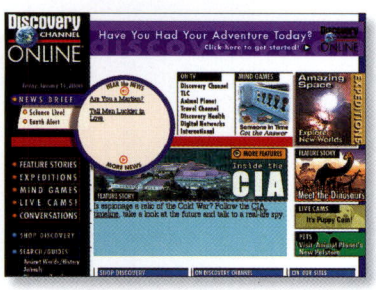
BEST GAMING SITE

Game Center

www.gamecenter.com

Part of the cnet organisation, this has everything – consoles, PC, news, hardware and cheats. Also worthy are ***www.gamespot.com***, with similar info in a funkier site; and for the 3D gamer, ***www.agn3d.com***.

BEST SCIENCE SITE

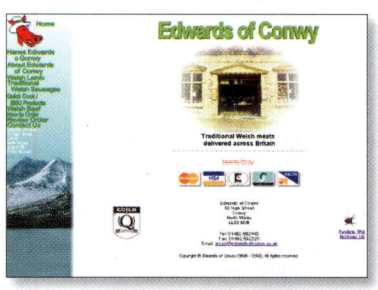


The Discovery Channel Online

www.discovery.com

A hell of a lot more entertaining than the planes-and-piranhas cable channel, this graphically-rich site is packed with hundreds of scientific treats for your perusal.

BEST SPECIALIST E-TAILER



Edwards of Conwy

www.edwardsofconwy.co.uk

Look at the pictures of delicious Welsh lamb, beef and sausages. Buy the delicious Welsh lamb, beef and sausages. Wait for the postman to deliver said items. Eat them.

the net

BEST SEARCH ENGINE
Google
www.google.com

BEST E-COMMERCE SITE
Amazon
www.amazon.co.uk

BRIGHTEST SPARK
Last Minute
www.lastminute.com

BEST PORTAL
Yahoo!
www.yahoo.co.uk

READER'S CHOICE
Loquax
www.loquax.co.uk

BEST TRAVEL SITE
Lonely Planet
www.lonelyplanet.com

BEST FILM/TV SITE
The Internet Movie Database
uk.imdb.com

BEST MUSIC SITE
Q Online
www.qonline.co.uk

BEST SPORT SITE
Cricinfo
www.cricinfo.com

BEST NEWS SITE
BBC
news.bbc.co.uk

BEST FINANCIAL SITE
Motley Fool
www.fool.co.uk

BEST USE OF MULTIMEDIA
Shockwave
www.shockwave.com

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www.virtualzones.co.uk

THE NET JUST GOT PERSONAL - THE ULTIMATE AVATAR COMMUNITY

WHISK ME AWAY, DARLING!

We've got 10 romantic weekend breaks for two to give away

This month, *the net* has a fantastic exclusive competition to win one of these great European breaks. To woo your partner in style this Valentine's Day, simply answer the question below and send it to the nice people at Lastminute.com by email or post...

Lastminute.com will give you and your partner an unforgettable weekend

lastminute.com

DESPERATE TO IMPRESS SOMEONE SPECIAL?

Whether you want to buy your way, woo your way or impress your way in to love – lastminute.com can make it happen with *the net* magazine. lastminute.com, the last minute solutions and inspiration company, are offering you the chance to impress someone special by winning one of ten romantic city breaks

You can choose to romance your partner in any one of these fabulous cities: Barcelona, Lisbon, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin, Reykjavik or Florence. You and your partner will be whisked away to the city of your choice and greeted with a romantic and adventurous weekend that neither of you will ever forget.

And, if you're lucky enough to win, lastminute.com will invite your partner on this romantic weekend with a bottle of champagne and a bouquet of flowers to make them feel even more special. Once there, it's up to you to do something different to truly win their love.

To win this fantastic chance of wooing your loved one, simply answer the following question and either email ***thenetcompetition@lastminute.com*** or send your answer to *the net* competition, c/o Tower House, Ketchum, 8-14 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HA:

Q: Which of these European countries does not have its own lastminute.com Web site?
A. France
B. Germany
C. Sweden
D. Latvia

ABOUT LASTMINUTE.COM

lastminute.com was founded in April 1998 with the aim of encouraging spontaneous, romantic and sometimes adventurous behaviour by offering customers the chance to live their dreams at unbeatable prices.

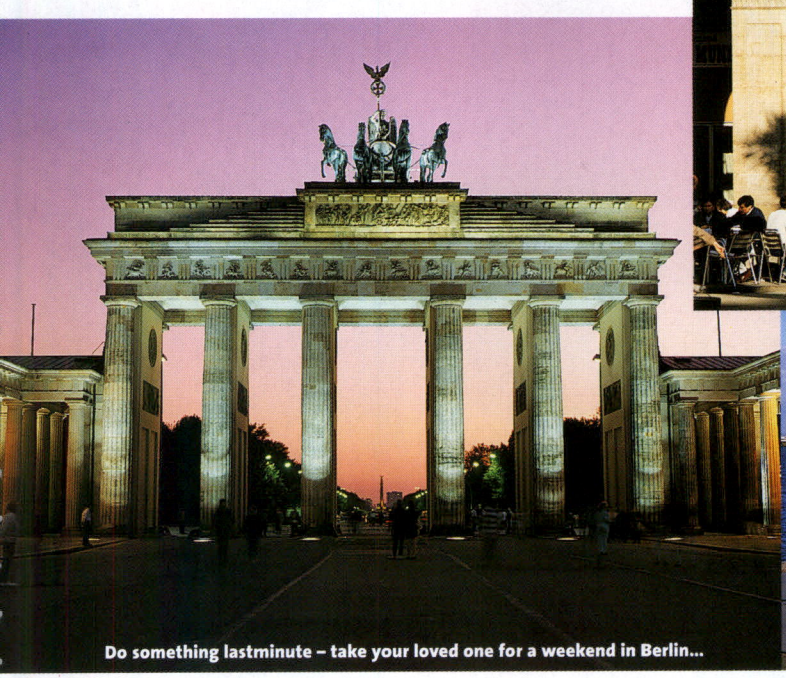
lastminute.com offer the solutions to and inspiration for everything you could possibly do last minute, including flights, hotels, travel, holidays, entertainment, gifts, restaurants and auctions. So, if you aren't one of the lucky winners of these great city breaks, you can still reap the benefits of the finest products and services in the world at special prices – at the last minute – by visiting lastminute.com.

Fancy being in Paris for breakfast, or got some free time to visit friends in Amsterdam? lastminute.com have places it knows you'll love, and booking them couldn't be easier. Why not give Eastern Europe a whirl this year? lastminute.com has flights to a number of cities in this part of the world that are all steeped in history and culture, and where the beer might only cost around 50p a pint! Or how about a trip further afield: beat those winter blues with a flight to the USA or Asia. But be quick, as all the destinations at lastminute.com are regularly updated.

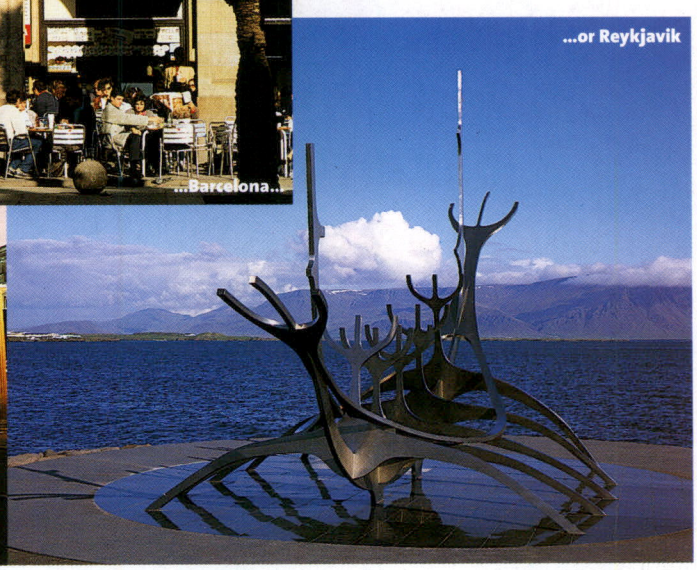
lastminute.com holds the keys to the finest hotel rooms around the world, at the lowest prices that are available. These deals are the result of exclusive arrangements with the hotels, who offer lastminute.com customers typical discounts of 30 to 70 percent off the normal price.

lastminute.com has also got together some fantastic holidays. In fact currently over 70,000 holidays are available; so whether it's a cultural city break you're after, some sand, sea and sun or simply just chilling in the countryside, it's all just a mouse click away – and you can book it now! lastminute.com can make your holiday dreams a reality. Getting there, staying there, playing there – short of finding you someone to take there, lastminute.com will handle the lot!

...Barcelona...



Do something lastminute – take your loved one for a weekend in Berlin...



...or Reykjavik

Terms & Conditions: The prize includes return flights and two night's accommodation for two people sharing a room. All other meals, drinks, travelling expenses and extras will be charged as taken. The holiday is subject to availability and must be taken between March and May 2000. The holiday is not transferable and there is no cash alternative. Only one entry per person. The prize draw/competition is open to all UK residents aged 18 or over, other than the employees (and their families) of Haymarket publications or lastminute.com or subsidiary companies. The competition winners will be picked on March 10th 2000 and notified in writing within 14 days of the draw. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. No responsibility will be taken for entries lost or damaged in the post. All entries are the sole property of Haymarket and the winner must be willing to have his or her name published. For details of correct answers and winners, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to *the net* magazine, Haymarket Publications. No purchase is necessary.

last minute .com

TROLLEYS AT DAWN!

Can online supermarkets deliver when the heat is on? *the net*'s soiree pushes them to the limit...

WE LIKE TO TAKE RISKS HERE AT *THE net*. We could have tested Sainsbury's and Tesco's online operations with a non-time-sensitive, monthly shop, and built in plenty of time for things to go wrong. But where's the fun in that? And anyway, the Web is all about immediacy. So, putting our lives on the line for the reader yet again, we risked dinner party death (ie potentially no food on plates or at the very least a missing course) to find out if online supermarkets could be trusted when it came to staging a real-life, last-minute supper for four.

Based on a budget of £30, our menu was asparagus with balsamic vinegar, followed by salmon steaks on a bed of rosemary mash with green pesto, finishing with a ready-made pudding (that we'd pass off as home-made). It was designed to test the stores on a range of fresh, pre-packed and chilled foods. It also had to sound suitably pretentious to make it look to the guests like we'd been planning our meal for ages. We also threw in a few extras such as mineral water, coffee, cheese and crisps, bringing our total number of items to 16.

Initially we wanted to test all of the major high street supermarkets with online operations; but it was narrowed down to a straight shoot-out between the big two, Tesco and Sainsbury's, because these are the only ones whose service is currently directly comparable. This will change soon with other major supermarkets at varying stages of online development (see panel overleaf).

THE RIGHT AREA?

So, first things first: do Tesco and Sainbury's deliver to our area, and how far in advance must we place an order to make sure it arrives when we need it?

With the exception of Iceland (see panel overleaf), online grocery shopping is pretty much a no-go if you live beyond the realms of the M25. Tesco will have 120 stores online by the end of February covering London, the SouthEast and the M1 Corridor, while Sainsbury's claims to reach 1.8 million homes within the M25. When it switches to a warehouse operation this summer, it will have every home in the M25 covered.

Fortunately, our KT5 postcode lay well within the hallowed online inner circle, confirmed by simply keying in the code itself. We were also told which store would be serving us – in both cases it was within a reassuring five-mile radius.

At this point we realised that online grocery shopping isn't the mega, high-tech leap that we initially thought. Yes, your shopping list is digitally transmitted down a phone line but at the other end it comes down to a shop assistant bagging up your groceries and a van delivering them – think of it as David Jason's Granville with a computer front-end.

'Think of the service as Granville with a computer front-end'

Both Tesco and Sainsbury's offer next-day delivery, but it works by shoppers picking a slot – and if those for the following day are taken, you're on to the day after. We shopped on Thursday afternoon and Tesco was able to offer us a number of delivery slots for the Friday and Saturday (we chose Friday at 1-3pm), while Sainsbury's no longer had any next-day deliveries so we opted for the earliest available: Saturday between three and 5pm. So far so good, although the Sainsbury's slot was leaving little margin for error.

We registered, keyed in our respective Reward and Club Card numbers (which took just a few moments), and then there was nothing between us and those virtual aisles.

Both stores work by the shopper selecting an aisle, followed by a shelf and then a product. The Tesco interface felt more intuitive to us because the aisle, shelf and product boxes stay on screen the whole time so you can flit backwards and forwards – great if you're indecisive but not so great in saving time online. With Sainsbury's, the list

GLORIOUS FOOD

of aisles is replaced by the shelves and the shelves by the products, which makes it slightly less user-friendly.

With both sites, once we'd decided on our product and updated our basket, we were informed that our selection had been made. If you click one too many things, don't worry, since you can remove anything at checkout stage. The Tesco site also keeps a record of the last three items you've bought and at any time on both sites you can view your basket and see how much you've spent. Both have a search facility for finding individual products, which we resorted to when we got fed up of clicking around.

If your machine crashes, or, even worse, the boss catches you doing your shopping on-screen, your chosen items are held in the basket so you can pick up where you left off. Luckily, we're immune to hassle from the boss – but sadly not Javascript error messages which caused us to repeatedly error on the Tesco site, dragging the whole shopping experience out considerably.

We had less technical problems ordering from Sainsbury's and by then we'd swapped from a Macintosh to a PC (Sainbury's isn't Mac-compatible yet), which proved more stable when dealing with Javascript.

'Don't just learn your metric weights – visualise them, too'

Anyone who wants to grocery shop online must be prepared to learn their metric weights. And don't just learn them, but visualise what 350g of salmon looks like. We could have caught and skinned one in the time we spent deliberating over whether the amount was enough. There's also no room for Imperial measures in cyberspace, so don't rely on being able to calculate the size of everything based on a 2lb bag of sugar like we did.

'Sorry, but Tesco was out of salmon'

If you shop online regularly, you can speed things up by doing a repeat or part-repeat order and both sites make this easy. Tesco also recommends using its CD-ROM-based system which allows you to compile an order offline and upload online later. The impromptu nature of this exercise meant we didn't have a CD to hand.

As for the range of goods, there was little to choose between the two. And while the only green pesto product that Sainsbury's threw up was a purée rather than a sauce (tsk, tsk), we were able to select all 16 items in both cases. A typical Sainsbury's store will have 22,000 products available while Tesco quotes between 20-30,000. Whatever is available at your allocated store should be available online – apart from in Tesco's case, cigarettes and deli produce.

When it comes to prices, it ceases to have anything to do with the Net since our prices were the same as the high street store's. That said, we were astonished that a Sainsbury's 2.5kg bag of Maris Pipers was 30p more than Tesco's. But we wouldn't have known if Tesco's were on offer because while store offers are open to online shoppers, neither site shows these yet.

So, our 16 items in the virtual bag, with minor variation between the two stores, we paid for our goods by credit card, plus the £5 delivery charge in both cases. We duly noted our order numbers and delivery times.

COMING TO A POSTCODE NEAR YOU

Somerfield reckons it's a couple of months away from launching its 24-7 service, which is already available over the phone or via the Open interactive TV service if you have Sky Digital. Sign up now at ***www.24-7.co.uk*** to find out when it's coming to your area. Asda also has a partnership with Open that brings home delivery to digital TV users in London, and soon the M25 area. It also has a CD-ROM-based system – find out if you're eligible by calling 0845 3007777.

Meanwhile, on the Net, Asda offers the Value Mad bargain search agent at ***www.asda.co.uk***. Marks and Spencer (***www.marks-and-spencer.co.uk***) sells some non-food lines online and is still testing its online grocery service. The first is in Beaconsfield, an M&S 'blackspot' where locals have to travel to Slough for a store. At ***www.waitrose.com*** you can sign up for news of its online ordering and like Tesco it's also an ISP. It currently sells wine online and will deliver goods to your place of work if your company has signed up for it. Safeway is bypassing the Net and using the Palm Pilot – you'll be able to order via a Palm on a modem link. The Co-op has a 'Net working party' but is sticking with funerals online at the moment. Finally, there's Iceland (***www.icelandfreeshop.co.uk***), which deserves to be singled out since it's the only one to offer a nationwide service – and it charges zilch for delivery, with a £40 minimum online order.

DELIVERY DAY

Both delivered well within the allocated time slots (Tesco at 1.10pm and Sainsbury's at 4pm) and all the food was in good condition – no complaints there, especially since both deliverymen carried the bags of shopping up three flights on stairs. However, the extra spring in the Tesco man's step was obviously due to the fact that he was a good few grammes lighter with three key products – salmon, pesto and bread and butter pudding – in absentia and no substitute. It had swapped one of the less crucial items (Evian) with an own-brand equivalent. Sainsbury's also failed on the bread and butter pudding but substituted the 225g requested with a 600g one. If you're unhappy with the substitute, it must be returned on the day.

SAINSBURY'S V TESCO

	Sainsbury's	Tesco
EASE OF USE	★★★	★★★★
PRICING	★★★	★★★★
FULFILMENT	★★★★	★★
RANGE	★★★★	★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★	★★★

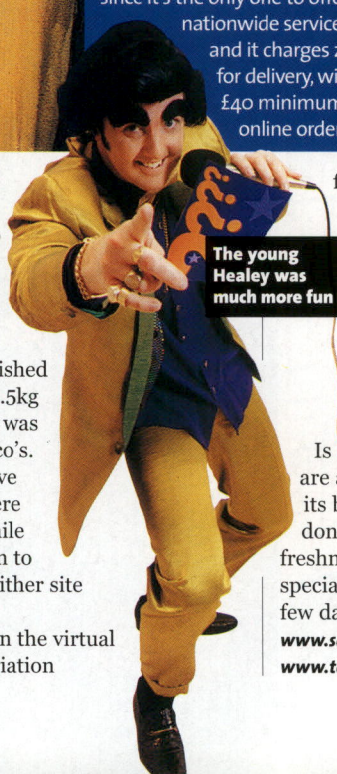
THE VERDICT

The shortfall of salmon and pudd in Tesco's order was a calamity when it came to the dinner party, putting the kibosh on two courses and causing chef to do 'something creative' with a frozen cod fillet. Put in context though, it's not surprising our shop fell a few items short of a full trolley since when did you last go to a supermarket and get everything you wanted?

Sainsbury's has to come out the winner because its fulfilment was better, but we preferred Tesco's shopping experience and it currently has 250,000 regular online shoppers (Tesco is also an ISP with 350,000 people having signed up).

Is online shopping for us? Half the office are already converts. Undoubtedly it's at its best for big, monthly shops. So if you don't get off on squeezing melons for freshness or are looking for some extra-special scoff and don't mind waiting for a few days (see overleaf), log on today.

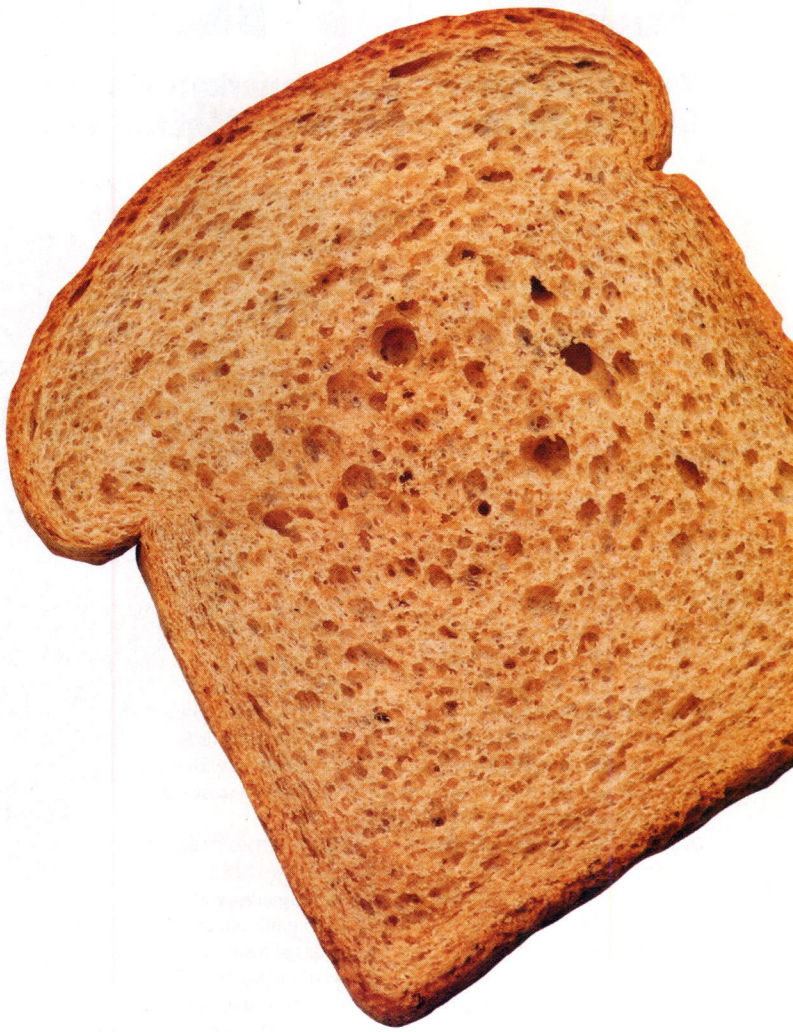
www.sainsburys.co.uk
www.tesco.co.uk



The young Healey was much more fun

WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO; MOVIESTORE

keep your bread



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THE BOUNTY OF THE WEB

You're not limited to supermarkets when buying food on the Net. Here's our pick of the online larder

1 Goat stew £5.50
2 Honey £2.55
www.mountain-flavours.com
The honey comes from 1200m up the Pyrenees (and possibly also the goats for the stew), and arrived within 24 hours thanks to this distribution network for local farmers, growers and butchers. **Delivery: cost varies**

3 130g foie gras £12.95
4 720g apricots in Moscato wine £5
5 100ml extra virgin olive oil with white truffle pieces £13.95
6 Choco pralin cake £9.75
7 Nougat artisanal £2.20
8 Polentina cake £13.50
www.gourmet-world.co.uk
Foie gras rubs shoulders with delicious choco pralin cake here. Our first order was delivered in 24 hours, but you should allow two weeks. **Delivery: orders under £50, £5.95; over £50, free**

9 100g dried porcini mushroom £6.90
10 75cl Guido D'Amico virgin olive oil £14.90
11 1kg hand-wrapped Panettone £12
12 300g cube tin of soft premium Amaretti with assorted fruit base £11.50
13 Caffe Sicurta (arabica beans) £5.40
14 100g salami £1.80
15 100g parma ham £3.10
www.eataliadirect.com
An Englishman is the purveyor of this fine Italian fare, helped by Italian foodie Franco. They sell only produce made by family-run businesses, so there's lots of 'like mamma used to make' fare. Big plus: it is also taking the concept of multi-buying online. Orders should be received within two days. **Delivery: orders under £75, £5; over £75, free**

16 Honey £7.65
17 Confit du canard £11.99
18 Chutney £2.99
www.the foodstore.co.uk
Well-loved and well-stocked Clapham deli that's just gone online. The minimum order is £10, and delivery is within 3-4 days. **Delivery: cost varies**

19 Organic fruit and vegetables
www.organicsdirect.com
This organic outlet delivers a massive ranges of fresh fruit and veg, from the mundane to the exotic – and it takes its fresh produce very seriously. Delivery is usually within 24 hours, depending on what time you order. **Delivery: free if veg is included in the order; £5.95 otherwise**

20 Betty's glacé fruit cake £18.95
www.bettysbypost.com
If you've been to the tea rooms you'll be delighted that dear old Betty's is now online. **Delivery cost: £5.90**

21 Organic bread rolls
www.organicdelivery.co.uk
They taste great and they're good for you. All freshly baked of course. Get some in when you're selling your house. **Delivery: variable**

22 Spices
www.sweetmart.co.uk
The Bristol Sweet Mart caters for the trade but courtesy of the Net, you can shop there, too – and it's relatively cheap if you buy a lot. **Delivery cost: from £3.50**

- **Seafare squid £4.50**
- **Madagascan vanilla pods £13**
- **Seaweed in brine £4.50**
- **Black summer truffles £10**

www.gourmet2000.net
The squid might look like pickled brain and the truffles like blackberries, but this is all your actual gourmet fare – and the site's full of similar stuff. Orders arrive within 1-2 days. **Delivery: £4.99 for orders under £100; otherwise free**

- **Y-Fenni £11.14 per kg**
- **Mimolette vieux £21.08 per kg**
- **Dolcelatta £9.44 per kg**

www.teddingtoncheese.co.uk
Take it from us, the online shop is a lot less whiffy than the real thing – which just happens to be down the road from *the net* editorial office. They're serious about cheese: 130 varieties at the last count. **Delivery: next day from £5.95**

- **Welsh sea salt with spices £3.50**

www.nwi.co.uk/seasalt
These Welsh sea-salt crystals taste of the cleanest ocean, say chefs – let's hope it has a Blue Flag. They're actually mined from the Menai Straits off Anglesey, then organic spices are added for extra taste. Purists can opt for the non-spicy variety. **Delivery: free postage under £10; allow 10 days**

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WRIGHT; WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE, SUE WEEKES

■ **Crown of lamb £5.95/lb**
■ **Merguez sausages £2.75/lb**
www.edwardsofconwy.co.uk
This majestic chunk of Welsh lamb and delicious merguez sausages were still standing proud after their travels, packed in ice and polystyrene for next-day delivery. **Delivery: £8**

■ **Smoked alligator £3.75/2oz**
■ **Smoked venison £4.95/4oz**
www.smokedproduce.co.uk/macdonalds/
This superlative site safely delivers the South American alligator (and the venison) vacuum-packed. You can also buy smoked haggis, plus kangeroo and ostrich. The company delivers as quickly as you need it. **Delivery: cost varies**

■ **Lobster £24** ■ **Marlin steak £4.50**
www.lobster.co.uk
Huge range of seafood, and other delicacies. Our lobster and marlin were delivered packed in ice and polystyrene in the specified 48 hours. We were slighty unnerved that the tied claws meant the huge crustacean hadn't yet passed over, but mercifully this didn't prove to be the case. **Delivery: £4.95**

■ **5lb Whole organic salmon £34**
www.freshfood.co.uk
Freshfood has a massive range of fish, shellfish, fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, game, breads, groceries – all looking digustingly healthy and good for you – and even fennel toothpaste. Our delicious king of fish came gutted and descaled (which makes it much easier to handle) in about a week. **Delivery: £5**

■ **Caviar £54**
www.caviareuro.co.uk
Beluga, Oscietra and Sevruga – it's all caviar to us. As well as selling the stuff, this site has all sorts of facts about the famed sturgeon eggs. There's a £50 minimum order, which is probably peanuts if you regularly eat the stuff. The overnight delivery is included in the price.

■ **Avruga from £9.95**
www.landandsea.net
Not exactly the poor man's caviar since it's still nearly a tenner for 120g, but Avruga substitutes herring roe for sturgeon eggs. The site also sells high-class deli fare. The minimum order is £20, and orders are dispatched within a week. **Delivery: £3.50**

HELP ME, WEB CHERUB!

It'll soon be Valentine's Day and you want to give your girl a treat. But how? Don't worry – whatever your budget, *the net*'s Web Cherub knows how to make a lady feel special...

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, WORLD PICTURES, KOBAL COLLECTION, HULTON GETTY, IMAGEBANK

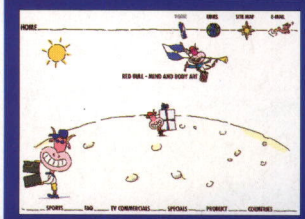
HE WAKES AND SITS bolt upright, his body bathed in sweat. He was having a nightmare but for a moment he can't remember what induced the terrible dream. Can the latest plot twists in *EastEnders* really have him so stressed out? As he glances at the calendar he remembers. It's 13 February, the day before Valentine's Day and he hasn't bought so much as a card for his beloved.

This annual lovefest throws up all manner of problems for us men. We don't really give a monkey's about the whole thing but we know that, unless we make a big deal of it, then we're going to be seriously lacking in bedroom action for some time to come. Then of course, there's the incontrovertible fact that men are crap at organising anything even vaguely romantic. It's hard enough to remember the date, never mind plan a romantic night out guaranteed to win us more brownie points than turning off the football to watch *Heartbeat*.

Fear not! *the net* can save your bacon when planning a Valentine's treat, giving the girl of your dreams a night to remember. With the help of our surfing Cupid, she'll be offering to iron your underwear for weeks to come...

WHEN IT ALL GOES RIGHT...

If she falls lovingly into your arms whispering sweet nothings at the end of the evening, take a quick look at these Web sites



CONDOMANIA

www.condoms4u.com

A huge variety including a new range of South Park condoms – although we're not sure Cartman has ever been arousing before.

ENGAGEMENT RINGS

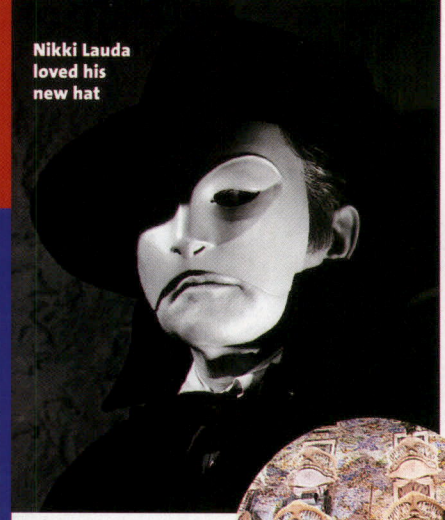
www.londongold.com

An American site but there's some sound advice on picking your engagement ring – and you could buy from across the Atlantic.

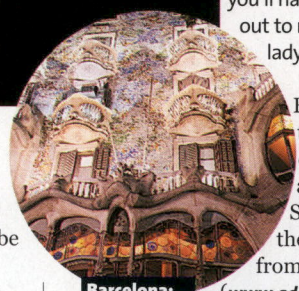
RED BULL

www.red-bull.com

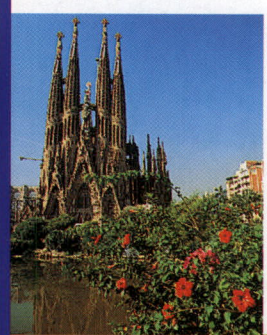
You're going to need some energy and there's nothing better than Red Bull to get your juices flowing, so to speak.



Nikki Lauda loved his new hat



Barcelona: psychedelic



MONEY TO BURN?

MONEY CAN'T BUY LOVE – BUT IT CAN HELP

If you've got more cash than you know what to do with, you'll have to pull the stops out to really impress the lady in your life...

First of all you need to pick her up and do it in style. Hire a chaffeur-driven S-class Mercedes for the trip at £62.50 from Adair (***www.adairs.com***), or really go upmarket and shell out £300 on a Bentley limousine from Browns Chauffeur Service at ***www.browns.uk.com***. When you knock on the lady's door you need some flowers to hand, so pop along to Interflora at ***www.interflora.co.uk***. The Passion Hand-Tied Bouquet is literally the pick of the bunch at £37 plus £3.20 for delivery. Apparently it's 'bursting with style and excitement', and by this time your date should be feeling pretty much the same way.

You've got her in the car, but you need somewhere to take her – and what could be

Dolly's stuffed Gene Wilder was the talk of the pen

Discipline was harsh at the school of sock puppetry

nicer than a bit of Spanish seduction in the stunning city of Barcelona? If you really have silly money to throw around, then flying Club Class on British Airways is the only way to travel. It will cost you a whacking £1,206 for the two of you at ***www.british-airways.com***. If that seems a little too steep then Easyjet (***www.easyjet.com***) quoted

'Prawn balls? No, I washed this morning'

a mere £116 return for two people.

When you're looking for a place to stay then la Ramblas is ideal, a gorgeous tree-lined avenue with a permanent buzz about the place. And hotels don't come much nicer than Le Meridien, situated on la Ramblas (***www.lemeridien-hotels.com***). You can choose from a number of different options but we opted for the Executive Room with one 'King' bed. Facilities include minibra (we assume they mean minibar, but who knows?), hairdryer, bathrobe – and the room has a view of the gothic quarter. A mere 48,000 pesetas, which translates to £180 for the night.

If you want to do a bit of background reading to impress your loved one with your knowledge of the city, a quick look at Barcelona On Line at ***www.barcelona-on-line.es/angles/*** should help and it will point you in the direction of a decent restaurant. Take her for a nice meal, soak up the atmosphere during a romantic stroll around the city later on and she'll be putty in your hands.

WHEN IT ALL GOES WRONG...

If you didn't listen to Web Cherub, check these out before chucking yourself off Chelsea Bridge

SAMARITANS

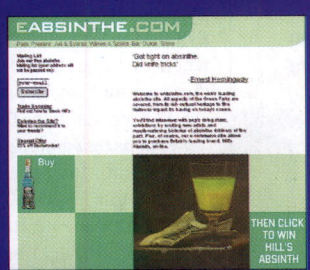
www.samaritans.org.uk

They might be a bit busy, but if it all goes horribly wrong and you need a shoulder to cry on, then given this lot a go.

FIRST PRIORITY ESCORT AGENCY

www.first-priority-escorts.com

Don't be ashamed about trying this agency – just give them a call. Girls are apparently chosen not just on looks, but 'charm, sensitivity and personality'. Right – like you care.



E-ABSINTHE

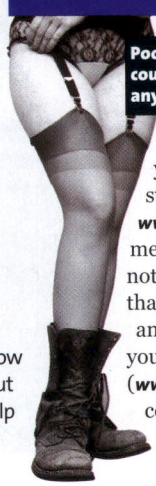
www.eAbsinthe.com

If getting smashed is the only answer, there's no better drink to do it with. This bar guide will show you where to buy the evil brew.

FOR THE REALISTIC

EQUAL AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND SENSE

We're not all blessed with money to throw around as if it's confetti at a wedding, but for a couple of hundred quid and the help of the Internet you can give her an evening so good that she might even let you have a night out with the boys at the weekend...



Poor Kevin still couldn't shift any records

Start off with a unique expression of your love. Although £9.95 may seem steep for the heart-shaped card at ***www.parotcards.com***, it lets you record a message and her favourite song onto it. It's not exactly CD quality, but it's the thought that counts. As for the evening itself, a show and a nice meal will show her how much you care. Have a look at Local-Restaurant (***www.local-restaurant.com***) or Restaurants.co.uk (***www.restaurants.co.uk***) if you want advice on somewhere to eat.

Many restaurants have their own sites and it could be worth your while to book a table from the site. Take Biagio Chez Victor (***www.biagio.co.uk/Chez_Victor/ChezMain.htm***) for example. Book your table online and you can have a look at the menu beforehand and impress the missus with your knowledge of the essential ingredients of Selle de Chevreuil a la chipollata. You can also do your homework on the wine list, which will make you look like the cultured, sophisticated chap that you most certainly aren't.

After a nice meal you could take the lady to a show. Tickets to see *Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty's Theatre on 14 February range from £10 to £35, so even the best seats will only cost £70 for the two of you at ***www.ticketmaster.co.uk***.

MR TIGHTWAD

IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

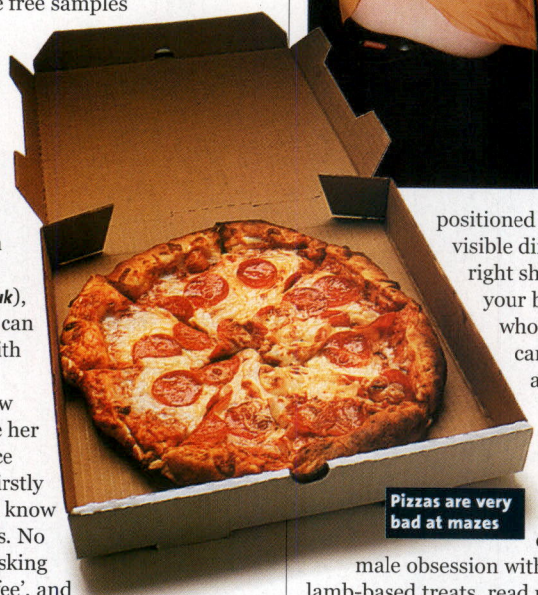
Your pound can stretch a long way on the Internet, so here's an evening out for the bloke who's strapped for cash...

There's no point spending cash on a card and feeding the money-grabbing machine that is the greetings card industry, so send an electronic one instead. Check out ***www.screengreetings.com*** for a selection of cards that will be sure to pluck the heartstrings of your loved one.

No matter how poor you are, you still have to eat, so you might as well make a bit of an

THE PERFECT VALENTINE

effort to take her out. Save 25 percent on a meal at the hotbed of romance that is Pizza Hut by grabbing the voucher on its Web site (***www.pizzahut.co.uk***). It would also be plain rude not to get the girl some sort of present, but obviously you don't want to be spending much, if any, money. Get her a pair of 'the sheerest, most luxurious tights you'll ever wear' – there are free samples up for grabs at Silkies (***www.silkies.co.uk***). And if you actually want to spend a little bit of money on her, order her some JD Wetherspoon vouchers (***www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk***), then at least she can get a round in with their help.



Pizzas are very bad at mazes

If you somehow manage to entice her back to your place after that, then firstly can you let us all know what your trick is. No doubt you'll be asking her 'back for coffee', and if you have some fancy blends it will impress her more than a cup of Nescafé. You can get free samples from the Sylvana Coffee Company at ***www.tnet.co.uk/sylvana/***.

ONE FOR THE LADIES...

HE'LL BE GRATEFUL, WHATEVER

Why should the onus always be on us blokes? It's leap year after all, so give your man an evening off and organise the night around what *he* wants...

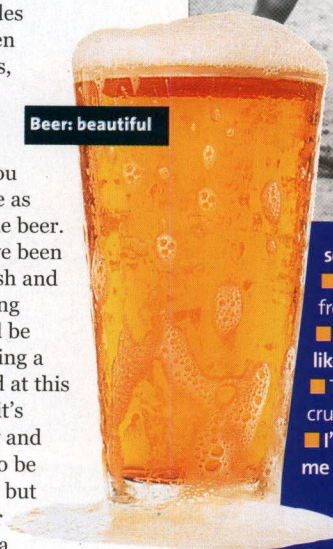
Bear in mind that Valentine's Day is on a Monday so there'll be live Premiership football on the television, and you should base the whole night around that. If you're taking him out for a meal first, he's only going to be interested in a curry and half a dozen pints of Kingfisher lager. For the Londoners among you why not try The Punjab Restaurant in Covent Garden. You can book online at ***www.onlinesales.co.uk/punjab/***. Alternatively you can find a curry house at ***www.curryhouse.net***.

Meal finished and it's nearly time for kick-off, so make sure you've done some research at the Half-Decent Footy Pub Guide at ***www.wsc.co.uk/footballpubs/index.html*** to find a good pub to watch the game at. Don't forget to sit with your back to the television, strategically positioned so that the set is visible directly over your right shoulder. That way your boy can take in the whole game and you can think he's looking at you.

Michelangelo's lost sketches revealed a very different fresco

As closing time comes around he'll be hungry again, so it's time for a kebab. If you're confused about the male obsession with these delicious lamb-based treats, read up at Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy (***www.h2g2.com/A61921***) and it will point you to a few of the best doners around.

When it come to buying him a present, a simple trip to ***www.lastorders.com*** to order a case of beer will suffice. Stella is surely the drink for the modern man – 5.2 percent pure hardcore Belgian lager. It was a mere £13.99 for a case of 24 bottles when we visited. And as men don't go that much on cards, send a virtual beer from ***www.kronenbourg1664.co.uk***. He's certain to appreciate the thought, especially if you make your message as intoxicating as the beer.



Beer: beautiful

Although you've been extremely unselfish and he's had a cracking night, you would be forgiven for feeling a little bit cheated at this point. After all it's Valentine's Day and you're entitled to be feeling romantic, but by now your lover has breath that's a mixture of lager, fags and chilli sauce, while you've had to share his attention with a mediocre Premiership game and a chicken biryani. So to finish the night in style – and to make you feel better – pay a visit to Victoria's Secret (***www.victoriassecret.com***) and buy yourself some sexy new underwear. He might even appreciate it himself – if he's sober enough to notice.

The late-night bad shirt shop was doing a roaring trade

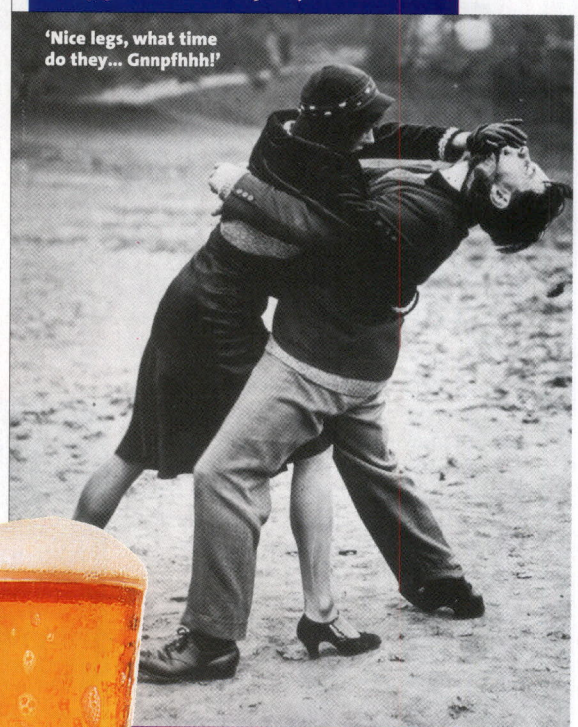
TEN FAVOURITE CHAT-UP LINES

If you haven't got a partner for the big night then don't worry. Nearly everyone is after a bit of how's your father on Valentine's Day, although you should avoid the 'just been dumped and all men/women are bastards' people crying into their pint glasses. If you aren't original enough to come up with your own chat up lines, try a few of these:

- **Is that a ladder in your tights? Or is it the stairway to heaven?**
- Do you want to dance? Yes? Well, piss off then – I want to chat your friend up.
- **Excuse me, I've spent all evening looking for a sexy girl – could I have your phone number so I can call her?**
- It's girls like you that stop me from becoming a monk!
- **You know, you could look a lot like my next girlfriend.**
- That outfit would look great in a crumpled heap next to my bed.
- **I'm new in town. Could you give me directions to your flat?**
- Why don't you come over, sit on my lap and we'll talk about the first thing that pops up?
- **There's a string on my heart, and it's just gone 'ping'...**
- **Pardon me miss, I seem to have lost my phone number. Could I borrow yours?**
- Nice tits. Mind if I feel them?

And if you're feeling really brave, or stupid... **Nice legs, what time do they open?**

Taken from ***www.the-hud.co.uk/chat.htm*** and ***www.tasteless-jokes.com***



'Nice legs, what time do they... Gnnpfhhh!'

confetti.co.uk

Unveiled.
A website to help you get married.

Win £10,000 towards the cost of your wedding.

Got something old, borrowed and blue? Well, here's something new.

confetti.co.uk is a new free website packed full of ideas and advice to help you organise every stage of your wedding, from the engagement to the honeymoon.

You'll be able to create a personalised wedding plan, view hundreds of beautiful dresses and investigate over 2,000 venues to find your dream setting. We'll also provide you with a website to publish your wedding list, and guests can even buy their presents at the confetti online gift shop.

And because we understand how expensive weddings can be, each and every month there's the chance to win £10,000 towards the cost of your big day.

So why not visit www.confetti.co.uk and enter now.

All you have to say is I do.

make your big day a whole lot bigger at confetti.co.uk

THE NEW KIDS IN TOWN

You no longer need a computer to get online. Andy Hutchinson takes a look at the new breed threatening your PC

Powerful, adaptable and useful they might be, but a modern PC, clad in figure-hugging beige sheet metal, is about as pleasing to the eye as Swindon on a wet Tuesday. Even if you've got a laptop, you'll have found that it's not easy to surf the Web on the hoof – a process that inevitably involves a bizarre collection of odd connectors and an expensive comms-ready mobile phone.

Let's face it – PCs are impractical when removed from the confines of the back-bedroom or office. So what are the alternatives for people on the go, or anyone, in fact, who'd rather install a bidet in their front room than bung a PC next to the TV?

WEB PHONES, WAP AND PDAS

Devices such as the Nokia Communicator (***www.nokia.com/phones/9110***) have married the mobile phone with the Personal Digital Assistant, producing a device that can be used for Web surfing wherever there's a mobile phone signal. But the phone is a bit of a compromise, forcing a device barely capable of displaying the time to run through the rings of Internet languages like HTML.

So the forthcoming Wireless Application Protocol system is good news. WAP (***www.wapforum.org***) is an open, global specification that'll deliver usable and speedy Net access to users of wireless devices like mobile phones. Where it differs from other approaches is that a new wireless-friendly language (WML) has been developed, which uses the strengths of the kind of small LCD displays found on mobiles.

To date there aren't too many devices on the market, but by this time next year the

Photo-Me

THE NET FOR NOTHING

Why shell out for a Dreamcast when you can get online for nowt?

DRESS LIKE A SCHOOLKID
Britney Spears knew she was doing dressing like a schoolgirl. It wasn't a blatant attempt to attract men, but a way of grabbing free Internet access – thanks to Tony 'A computer in every classroom' Blair.

BECOME A STUDENT
Scrounge money off taxpayers, drink lots of cider and smoke marijuana. Oh, and when you can be bothered to attend lectures you'll have free Net access on campus. Just remember not to wash.

BECOME A LIBRARIAN
One of the best places to access the Internet is in the library. If you can handle working with women who should be claiming a pension and wear half-moon glasses, this could be the one.

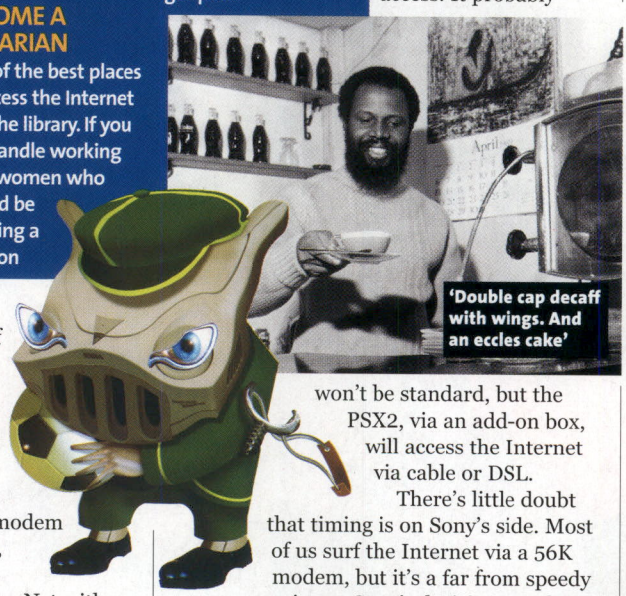
GET A JOB AT AN INTERNET CAFÉ
There are loads of 'em around, so read up on a few Net buzzwords, practice your cappuccino frothing and get a job at one .

APPLY FOR WORK EXPERIENCE AT *THE NET*
We're always ready to let other people come and do our work for us so we can spend more time down the pub – and we'll let you spend as much time as you like on the Internet into the bargain. As long as you don't expect to get paid.

marketplace will be flooded with them. The Ericsson R320 (***www.ericsson.com***) was one of the first WAP-equipped phones to hit the market, and very funky it is too. Not to be left out, Nokia have released the 7110 (***www.nokia.com/phones/7110***), which enables you to browse the WAP-Web via its large and good-looking LCD display.

There's little doubt that WAP will become an essential facility for mobile phones over the coming years. The fact that it's a global specification means that manufacturers can happily create WAP-enabled phones, safe in the knowledge that they'll work anywhere in the network. At the moment the amount of WAP content available is nowhere near the amount of stuff you'll find on the Web, largely consisting of news headlines, share prices and the cricket score, but expect the technology to take off like a rocket this year. And of course, you'll look cool as you squint into the screen of a cutting-edge mobile phone to receive your email.

Meanwhile, for half the price of a laptop, you can pick up a Psion Series 7 (***www.psion.com***). These sexy palmtops can accommodate a modem card or run via a mobile phone, and their cut-down version of Windows means you can surf the Net with a device that fits into your jacket pocket. Soon, both Psions and Palm Pilots will come with WAP technology built-in, meaning fast mobile access to all those online goodies.



CONSOLES & SET-TOPS

PC users have been enjoying multiplayer games for a long time now, but the closest the average console user gets to this kind of gameplay is via a two- or four-player game like *Mario Kart*. The joys of the large-scale multiplayer games that have taken the PC games market by storm have passed console users by. Until now.

Sega's Dreamcast console (***www.sega.com/console/index.shtml***) comes complete with a 56K modem. Hook this baby up to your phone line and you can play games online against Dreamcast users all over the world. It also comes complete with its own Web browser, so you can surf the Internet from a compact, living-room-friendly box. Sega have also released a Dreamcast keyboard, so you can send email or use chat rooms without having to enter information clumsily via a joypad.

But as groovy as the Dreamcast and its Web-friendly design is, the Sony PlayStation 2 (***www.playstation-europe.com***) is the machine that will really bring console owners into the wired world. Sony's console launches in Japan this spring and won't arrive on these shores till some time after that, but when it does it'll include support for wideband Internet access. It probably won't be standard, but the PSX2, via an add-on box, will access the Internet via cable or DSL.

There's little doubt that timing is on Sony's side. Most of us surf the Internet via a 56K modem, but it's a far from speedy experience. Sony's decision to release the PSX2 well after the rival Dreamcast machine means that many homes will have been equipped for wideband Internet access once it finally starts to ship. Combine the vastly superior bandwidth of DSL or cable with the PSX2's vastly superior hardware (including a DVD player) and you've got the first true multimedia box. Best of all, it should only cost a few hundred quid.

You'll look really cool as you squint into your phone to pick up email

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of British homes already have email access – possibly without realising it. Sky Digital receivers (***www.sky.co.uk/digital***) include a modem used to download programme listings, access Sky's Open Shopping service and (at a pinch) send and receive emails. Because the modem shares a phone line (it operates along the same lines as the Switch card swipers you get in shops), download speeds are far from impressive. Anyone with a Sky box can register an email account then send and receive mail via BT Click. Whilst this will open up the wonderful world of email to a whole new sector of society, it works and feels like a botch: in order to send anything other than short 'I'm running late' messages, you'll need to buy a keyboard.

HIGH STREET FIXES

The movement that's pushing the Web out from the home computer will, it appears, extend all the way onto the High Street. BT are trialling Web-enabled booths, called TouchPoints (***www.touchpoint.bt.com***), which include full Internet and email access via an ISDN link... once you've paid for the privilege, of course.

BT have also hooked up with, of all people, the PhotoMe Corporation (the company that's made millions of passport holders look like criminals on a bad hair day). Those hulking great booths found in rail stations and branches of Boots will soon feature the same Web access as BT's own TouchPoints, along with third-party content from banks, travel agents and retailers (***www.photo-me.co.uk***). Safeway will also be installing similar booths in its shops on a trial basis this year: for £2 for 10 minutes, you can access email or the Web via an ISDN link. And, good Lord, even automatic cash machines are getting in on the act! Expect them to offer a surfing fix before the year is out – though what you're meant to do while a queue of angry (and broke) cardholders shuffles behind you has yet to be explained.

WHAT NEXT?

What form will new Web devices take? If Cisco Systems (the company that build the networking gear that powers most of the Internet) has its way, they'll be big, white and hot. Cisco has hooked up with a home appliance company to produce a range of Web-enabled 'hybrid' products – and first on sale will be a 'Virtual Chef' microwave which can download recipes and cooking instructions from the Net. This will be made possible by Cisco's new 'residential gateway' (***www.cisco.com***) which links wideband Internet connections to all sorts of household items, from fridges to televisions.

It's hard not to snigger at photos of early computers – the ones taking up whole rooms to generate all the power of a calculator. So think of the laughs your kids'll have when you tell them you once spent a small fortune on a suitcase-sized box, just to get online.

PICTURE: HULTON GETTY ILLUSTRATIONS: MAX ELLIS

cut here

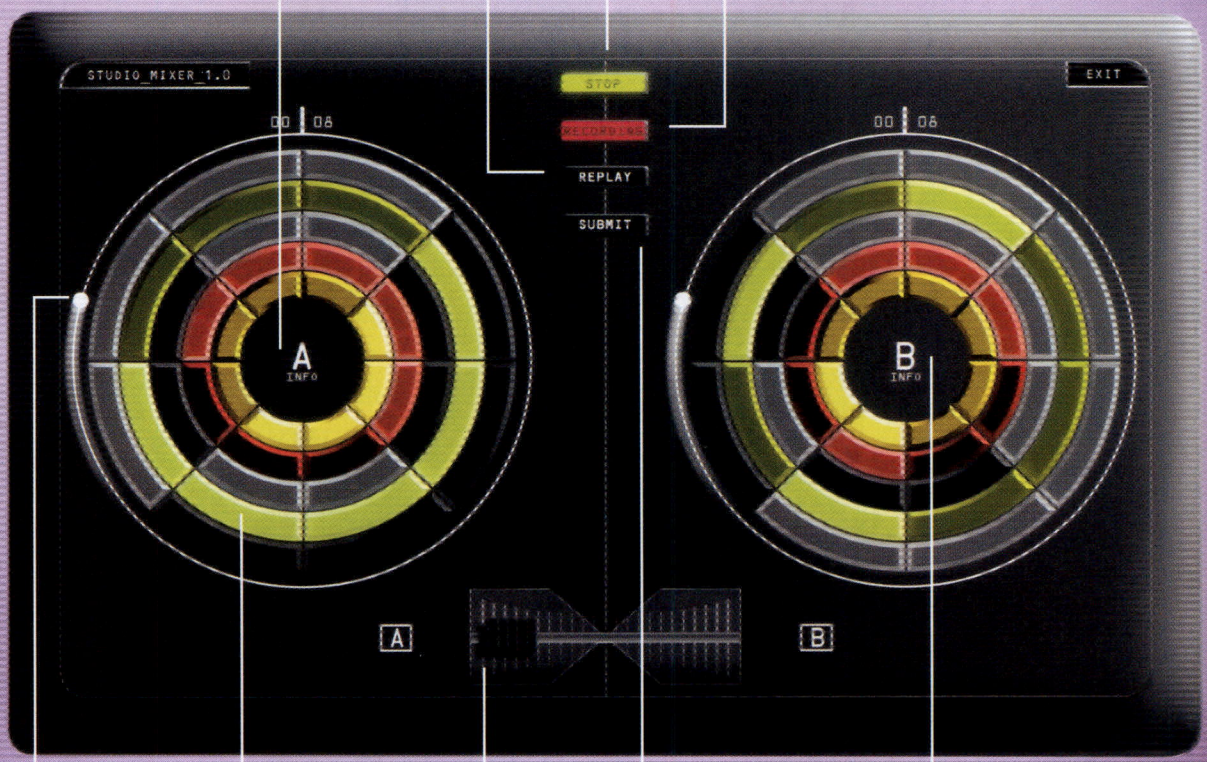
Sound bank A
Contains the primary audio samples. Different concentric rings contain different samples: drums – green, bass – blue, vocals – yellow, synth – red, riffs – grey.

Stop/Play button
Activates the playhead.

This mixer contains all the elements of a track by DJ Laurence Nelson. By activating the different audio samples, you can remix your own version.

Replay
Press this to replay your mix. When you're satisfied, submit it.

Record button
Press this to start recording your mix. The mixer records all your sample and fader moves.



Playhead
Circles the soundbanks like a radar screen trace. Plays the activated samples as it passes over them, moving in a clockwise direction.

Crossfade
Smooth volume fader to mix the two sound banks' output together. Works just like a crossfade on a set of decks.

Sound bank B
Contains secondary audio samples.

Audio sample
Click to activate the audio sample. Click again to deactivate the sample.

Submit
Hit submit once you have recorded a mix. You'll be told how close your mix got to Laurence Nelson's definitive version.

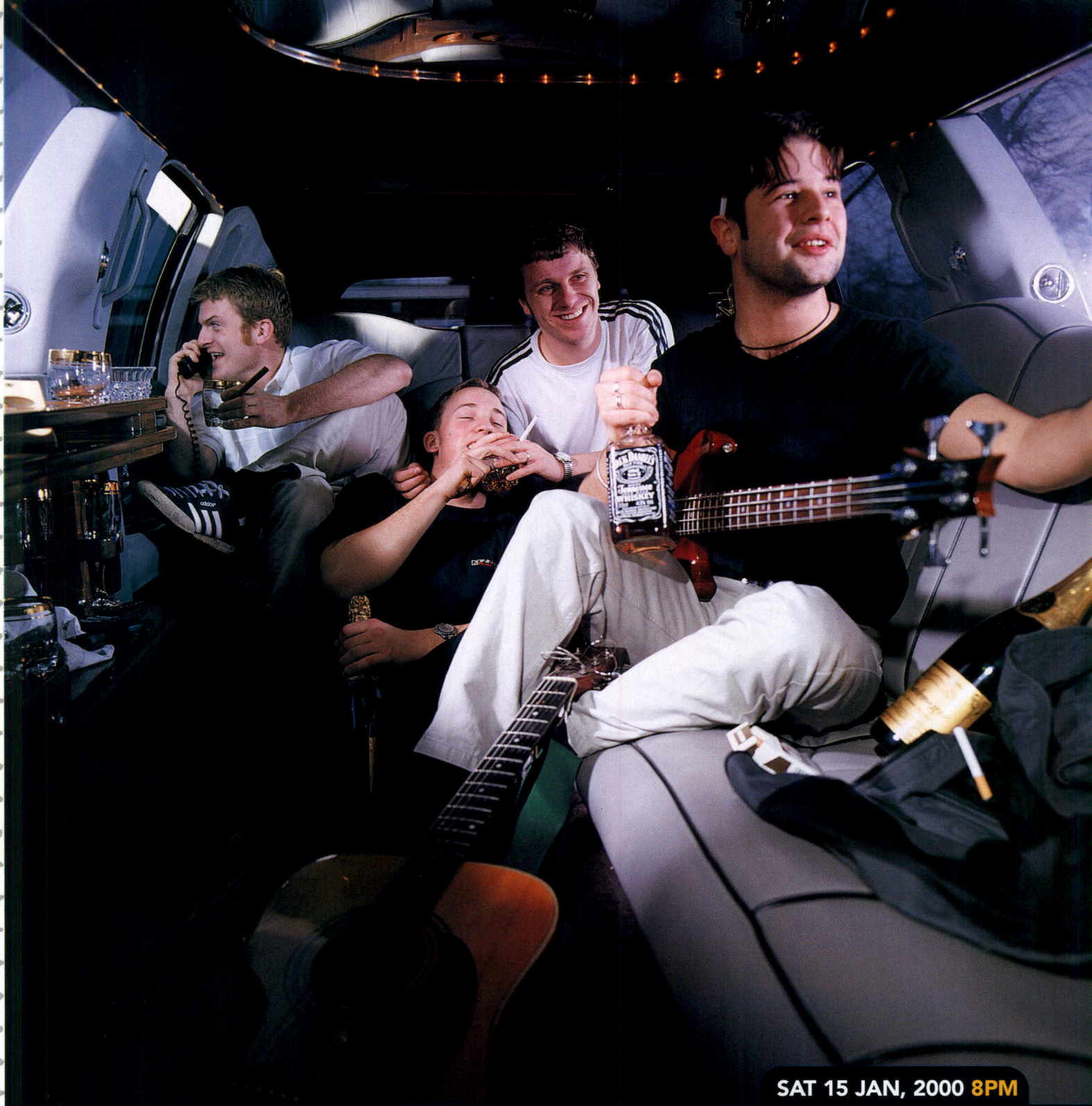
Ever fancied remixing a top DJ's track? Here's your chance.

This is just one of the tools BT gives you at getoutthere.bt.com, a site dedicated to helping unsigned musicians fulfil their potential. Keep this guide and you can use it when you get to the site.

getoutthere.bt.com BT

SAT 15 JAN, 2000 10AM

MP3



SAT 15 JAN, 2000 8PM

THE HITMAKER

Music over the Web could turn buskers into Beatles – without record companies getting a penny. So who's behind tomorrow's hits? Find out with *the net*'s guide to the MP3 revolution

It's yet another abbreviation, and it's now officially better than sex. According to Net-watchers at ***searchterms.com***, January saw 'MP3' overtake 'sex' as the number one search engine request. Small children and twentysomethings the world over must have emptied their Christmas stockings, and shortly afterwards swamped the Internet in search of beautiful music for their sexy new Diamond Rio 500 portable MP3 players.

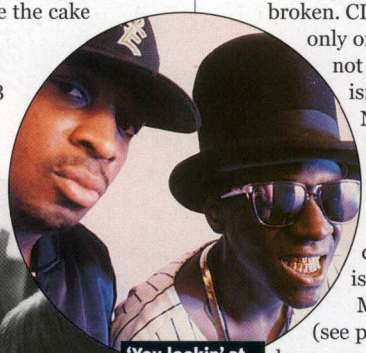
Just in case you've been in a coma for the last year and are wondering what we're talking about, MP3 is a compact way of storing high-quality digital sound which can be downloaded over the Internet. MP3, or Motion Picture Experts Group Audio Level 3 as we call it here at *the net*, gives you CD-quality sound in a file format that requires

roughly one Mb for every minute of music. This means that a single track in MP3 format is between three and five Mb in size – a reasonable download even at 28.8Kbps – which you can store and replay on your computer, download into an MP3 player's temporary memory, or burn onto a CD. That's why it's so exciting, and why the $40 billion-a-year music industry is in a spin.

Analysts are predicting that 15 percent of all music will be acquired digitally – but not necessarily legally – by 2003, because MP3 can be copied and distributed around the Net; very scary news for an industry losing $5 billion a year from piracy. But perhaps what really worries record labels is that artists won't need them, and they'll have to wave goodbye to those contracts which slice the cake heavily in their favour. All together now... 'aaahhh'.

Record labels may have to wave goodbye to those contracts

Michael Robertson, MP3 guru and the man the *Los Angeles Times* said is 'feared and loathed' by the most powerful forces in the record industry, founded MP3.com in 1997. He says MP3 will change the music industry forever. 'I'll say what everyone in the music business knows, but is afraid to say for fear of damaging future prospects or existing relationships,' he explains. 'The music industry we have now is broken. CDs cost $15, but artists make only one or two dollars per CD. It's not right for the consumer and it isn't right for the artist. The Net is breaking up the cartel. The music industry is huddling around and deciding the way things are going to be – well, those days are over. The Internet is unstoppable.'



'You lookin' at me funny?'

'...and this one is by the Sex Pistols'

MP3 – or something akin to it (see panel) – is here to stay. So how can you find your favourite bands on the Web? There are traditionally three ways to get MP3 files off the Internet. The first and most obvious port of call is MP3.com, which has received one billion requests for downloads since going online, and adds about two Gb of music to its site each day. What's more, downloads are free. If they get your feet tapping, come back and buy a CD. But MP3.com largely hosts newcomers and unknowns: 40,000 bands with names like 303-reactor and Big Bill and the Cool Tones.

THE BIG NAMES

The second way to get MP3s is to find them through a search engine and download them from the thousands of illegal websites, Ftp hosts and Usenet groups. Here you'll find just about anything you want, but downloads often don't work and sites are being shut down all the time. Although it's not illegal to download from these sites, only to upload to them, it's still a dodgy old business and we don't approve. So go to a site like ***www.emusic.com*** and buy either albums or even specific tracks for less than a pound a time.

Although the legal sites are mainly providing music from new bands, some big-name artists have proved more willing to embrace the technology than their labels. emusic.com is currently selling an exclusive MP3 album from They Might Be Giants and a collection of singles from The Wedding Present. Both the Beastie Boys (***www.beastieboys.com***) and Billy Idol (***www.billyidol.com***) have run into problems with their record labels for giving away MP3s on their sites, but Alanis Morrisette was able to give away tracks at MP3.com last year as a promotion. She told the site: 'The less fear I have, the more information I had, the more excited I was [about MP3]. It's open-ended and limitless, which is always exciting as an artist.'

The Grateful Dead – who have always benefited from the exposure given to them via bootleg recordings of their gigs – last year outlined rules that would allow their fans to post and trade certain MP3 files for non-profit purposes (***www.dead.com***). 'Standing in front of the MP3 freight train and

SO WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Digital music in downloadable format might be with us for good, but that doesn't mean we'll still be listening to MP3 in a couple of years' time. There are plenty of young pretenders trying to knock it off the top spot, and they all claim to provide better quality music. Search for MP3 at *www.microsoft.com* and, abracadabra, you get a marketing pitch for Microsoft's very own rival format, Microsoft Audio, which plays on the latest Windows Media Players. According to the software giant, MS Audio gives MP3 quality at half the file size, and is the fastest growing digital music format in the world. If anyone can muscle in on the market, Microsoft can; and last year they did a deal with RCA so that their files would play on the Lyra portable MP3 player (*www.lyrazone.com*).

Another grown-up competitor for the ears of the kids comes from telecoms giant AT&T, who are promoting their a2b format and player (*www.a2bmusic.com*). a2b is widely regarded as the best-quality Internet digital format because it uses a more advanced method of compression. They have already begun working with some of the major record labels to distribute songs by artists such as Lenny Kravitz and Tori Amos.

But the current most popular format after MP3 is Liquid Audio (*www.liquidaudio.com*), which uses advanced sound technology and boasts quality similar to a2b. More importantly for the future of online music – and more importantly for the record labels – Liquid Audio, like the a2b and Microsoft Audio formats, are all more secure than MP3: they make it harder for people to copy the music. These four are all promising the record industry that Spotty Joe won't be able to copy and distribute their entire back catalogue to his spotty friends. MP3 could easily be made more secure, but it's already developed a bad reputation as the preferred file-type of music pirates, which means that most labels are likely to continue to shy away from it.

WORDS: DAVID HUTCINSON; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO, RETNA, HULTON GETTY

However hard she pushed the walls kept closing in

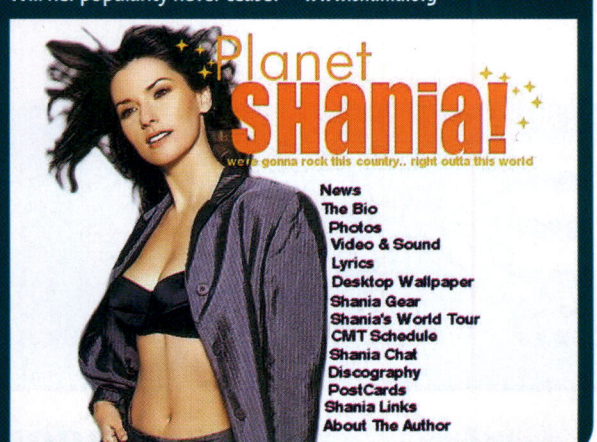
FIRST LADY OF THE INTERNET

By all accounts, country diva Shania Twain doesn't impress too easily. She can't have failed to be swayed by her newfound status as the Internet's first lady, however. Since releasing latest album *Come On Over* in May last year, the Nashville star has racked up 16 million sales in the US and 2.5m this side of the pond, making it the 14th best-selling album of all time according to ***hometown.aol.com/PaulHry/music/riaa.html***, which collates official Billboard figures to produce an overall chart.

Internet users are similarly swayed by Shania. She spent four months in Billboard's Internet sales chart (*www.billboard. com*), and was voted favourite artist by UK music fans at ***charts.merseyworld.com*** for five consecutive months. CDDB (*www.cddb.com*), which combines MP3 download figures with online sales, makes *Come On Over* the most popular release of the last year. And nobody has sold more albums at Boxman (*www.boxman.co.uk*) so far in 2000.

Already, there are at least 40 Twain tribute sites doing the rounds in cyberspace, many (such as 'Gorgeous Shania Twain' and 'Planet Shania') crossing that fine line between sycophantic and scary. Will her popularity never cease?

Apparently not...
www.shania-twain.com
www.shania.net
www.shania.org



screaming for it to stop isn't going to save you,' says their lawyer. 'The wise move is to set a policy for your individual band or label and live with it. It isn't as if you have to abandon your music to the public domain in order to participate in the MP3 community.'

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT...

And from a slightly different musical genre, Public Enemy's Chuck D has been singing MP3's praises on their Web site, ***www.public-enemy.com***. 'This is a brilliant inroad into music going global. Let the lawyers and the accountants worry about copyright issues.' The band released tracks from their most recent album as MP3 downloads – a move which got them sacked by label Def Jam.

That was no surprise: record companies have been slow to welcome the technology. So slow, that in October 1998 the Recording Industry Association of America filed a lawsuit against Diamond Media to prevent sales of the Rio, claiming it abetted copyright violations. But some companies are facing up to the inevitable. In December, Platinum Entertainment – the US's largest independent record label – said it would offer its catalogue for free on a advertising-supported website, ***heardon.com***. Platinum represents some big names, The Beach Boys and Dionne Warwick among them. 'This is exactly the right move for music content owners going forward,' explains Steve Devick, CEO of Platinum Entertainment. 'We feel that the free giveaway of our music on the Internet will immediately result in a very busy Web site. The site will also be our most important vehicle in finding new talent.'

Alanis Morrisette gave away MP3 tracks last year as a tour promotion

Unlike most labels, Platinum has realised that you can't put the genie back in the bottle. High-quality downloadable music is here to stay – although chances are you won't be able to slyly download all the music you can listen to free for much longer. New technologies like electronic watermarks will allow record labels to protect their copyright, and pirates are actually easier to catch on the Internet than when they're selling out of a suitcase. It all means that you'll pay for MP3 tracks, just as you paid for their forerunners, although with few distribution costs and no packaging they should be a lot cheaper.

But MP3 will mean more than just convenience for the consumer; there's a lot at stake for the musicians as well, because the bell is tolling for the major labels. Even as they begin to think about adapting the new technology to their ends, it's probably too late. The last word comes from Michael Robertson: 'Ultimately, consumers can decide if the music business will be concentrated in the hands of a small number of companies intent on monopolising the industry, or be awakened to a new dawn of free and open competition.'

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peoplesound.com has gone straight in as the UK and Europe's No 1 Free Music Download site.

With over 2,000 of the hottest new acts, peoplesound.com is the way to discover great new music on the internet.

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7009

*one per household, while stocks last

THE KIT PARADE

All the hardware you'll ever need to record, store and play back sweet, sweet digital music

1 YAMAHA YST-MS50 £99

The quality of MP3 is wasted if all you've got is a pair of tinny speakers. These Yamahas consist of a pair of treble/mid-supplying satellites and a weighty sub-woofer. There's plenty of crack and fizz to the sound; MP3 files are relayed with aplomb, and there's even enough quality in the mid-range for CD playback.

www.yamaha.co.uk/online

2 CREATIVE LABS DESKTOP THEATRE 2500 £199

Five powder-black 8cm speakers and a compact sub driven by a dedicated amp/control box, this system boasts both Dolby Digital and Pro-Logic decoding – ideal for DVD – and pseudo multichannel modes for music, movies and games.

www.creative.com

3 SHARP MD-MT821H £230

If you'd prefer a more versatile portable recorder than an MP3 player, try a MiniDisc personal: they can be connected straight to your PC via the digital outputs on your soundcard. This Sharp has stylish looks and a great sound – what more could you ask for?

www.sharp.co.uk

4 PANASONIC SJ-MR100 £250

Panasonic makes the smallest, cutest MiniDisc players around. The SJ-MR100 recorder, while not as small as the gorgeous playback-only SJ-MJ70, will allow you to store your MP3s then listen on the move.

www.panasonic.co.uk

5 VIDEOLOGIC SONICVORTEX2 £65

This card is an ideal budget solution for listening to music on your PC. It'll drive four speakers and offers SPDIF digital output, allowing you to record straight to MiniDisc. Comes with a Jet-Audio multimedia suite for managing MP3 playback and Future Best 3D software, for mixing music in three dimensions.

www.videologic.com

6 CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER LIVE! PLATINUM £145

In terms of features and sheer sonic ability this is fantastic value for money. It comes packaged with the Live! Drive II, which fits into a drive bay to give easy access to its phono and SPDIF connections – much easier than scrabbling around at the back of your PC.

www.creative.com

7 GUILLEMOT MAXI CD –RW 622 £150 (AND FALLING)

Digital music eats up hard disc space, so start burning CDs if you're serious about your sounds. The 622 copies 70 minutes of audio in 35 minutes. Easy to connect and set up.

www.guillemot.com

8 SONY CRX140E-RP £230

Sony's tongue-twisting CRX140E-RP offers incredible speed: it can burn a CD in eight minutes. Comes bundled with MP3 management software and Cubasis, which lets you create your own music.

www.sony.com

9 PONTIS MPLAYER3 £140 (32MB CARD VERSION)

This MP3 player offers good sound quality and plenty of storage, being capable of managing anything up to 4Gb cards – when they're available. Works with both Macs and PCs.

www.brunelcommercial.freeserve.co.uk

10 THOMSON LYRA £200

The new Lyra comes as a package of player, 64Mb memory card, card-writer, headphones, software and batteries. The player can easily store a complete album at top quality, and the software lets you copy CD tracks into memory for portable use.

www.thomson-lyra.com

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN; PHOTO: NICK WRIGHT

Two-Goal Cushion in sonic action

Want to get your music on the Web? *the net* followed the recording and uploading of an MP3 track in a day

WE COULD BE HEROES... JUST IN ONE DAY

From play-in-a-day guitar books to overnight success, it seems a day is a long time in showbusiness. Of course it's not like that at all – every new sensation has previously plugged away in obscurity. But it's excuse enough for *the net* to set a challenge: to record and upload an MP3 track in a single day.

Firstly, you need a band; we plucked hungry four-piece Two-Goal Cushion from busking on the cold streets of Bolton, but it could have been anyone – even you, if you follow the increasingly simple steps to posting your tunes on the Net.

It helps if you have the songs, and as they warmed up on a chill January morning the band already knew the track they wanted to 'cut'. In the olden days, it would have been a matter of getting it down on tape; these days it's all done on computers.

This may sound obvious, but the first bit of kit you need is a recording program. Digital audio editing allows you to manipulate waveforms by cutting, pasting and adding effects on-screen. Decent audio programs let you record different tracks separately and mix them together – useful for adding samples and for laying down extra guitar tracks, man.

Hungry four-piece Two-Goal Cushion were plucked from the streets of Bolton

There are many packages available, both on the Net and in the shops, and prices vary. Digidesign's ProTools (***www.digidesign.com/main.html***) is one of the industry favourites – you can tell because the price is in the hundreds of pounds. If you're not confident enough in your music to put that sort of money where your warbling mouth is, Cool Edit is somewhat less bank-busting – download a shareware version from ***www.syntrillium.com***.

On the other hand, avoid all this new-fangled mixing by singing into your battered old tape recorder – as long as it's got an output jack you can then connect to your PC. But you'd still need a program to turn that (analogue) input into a digital file, such as a .wav, before MP3-ising it.

Back to the band. We left Two-Goal Cushion huddled in the corner of a studio feverishly practising *Treading Water*, the song they were about to record. The backing track of guitars, bass and drums was recorded first, using several inputs on the studio's 16-track mixing desk, but you could do the same without a multi-channel desk by recording instruments direct to your computer one at a time, then pasting – overdubbing – the others on top in your digital audio programme. Indeed, Two-Goal Cushion employed this tactic when lead singer Craig added his honey-throated vocals, then guitarist Gary added a few more

The point of MP3's success is ease and speed of download when compared to .wav

guitar passages and harmony tracks.

After the song was mixed, it was time to get it off the hard drive and into the public domain. During mixing, the song had been saved in the memory-hungry .wav form that used to be the industry audio standard before this MP3 upstart came along. At this stage, .wavs can be burned onto computer CDs for storage purposes – handy for recording music on someone else's computer and uploading it elsewhere. The files can also be uploaded onto the Net as they are for the downloading delectation of your audience. However, the sheer size of the file will deter many; remember, the entire point of MP3's success is its ease and speed of download because the files it produces are up to 12 times smaller.

What you need is an encoder: a software programme which converts the .wav (or indeed other audio files, such as MIDI) into an MP3 track. A vital part of the MP3 process, encoders are available free all over the Net – try typing 'MP3 encoder' into a search engine and see how many options you get as people fall over each other to give you free, idiot-proof software.

The song was first saved as a .wav file

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO

By such acts of generosity are new media born on the Web, and once you've taken your tune through the MP3 squeezebox by encoding it, you can sling the resultant file wherever you like. Just eight hours after Two-Goal Cushion went into the studio, the band were emailing their song to chums. They in turn could burn it onto a CD, or copy it onto a portable MP3 player and sing to bemused passers-by in the park.

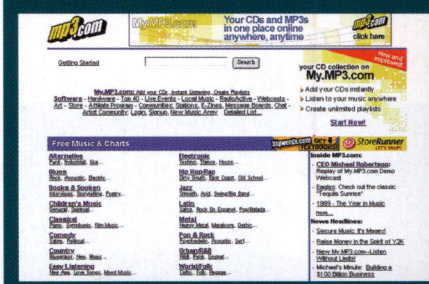
And, of course, they could upload it onto the Net. Try sending your songs to popular download sites like ***www.peoplesound.com***, or to any of the others in the panel to the right. Your magnum opus is now ready to plop onto the world's desktop. Better get the limousine ready.

To see how Two-Goal Cushion fared in our MP3 Jukebox Jury, turn the page...

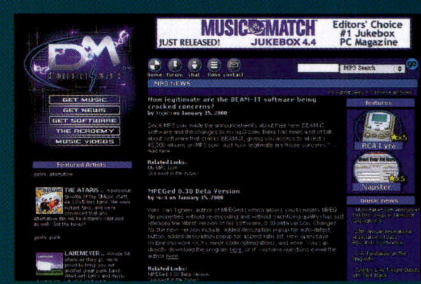
MORE SITES FOR SORE EARS

REAL JUKEBOX PLUS GOLD $29.95 *www.real.com/jukebox/*
Download the latest version of this fine player.

PCDJ PHAT *www.visiosonic.com*
PCDJ Phat's two virtual turntables allow you to mix MP3 files – and best of all, it's free.

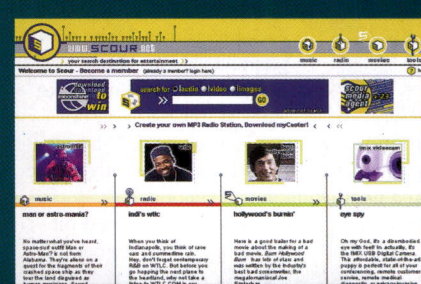


MP3.COM *www.mp3.com*
Pioneering site with tens of thousands of free and legal tracks, but mainly by unknowns.



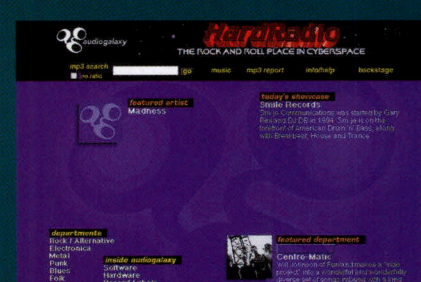
DMUSIC *www.dmusic.com*
Buy and sample tunes from bands like punk legends Suicidal Tendencies.

SONGS.COM *www.songs.com*
Claims to represent the largest group of successful independent musicians on the Web.

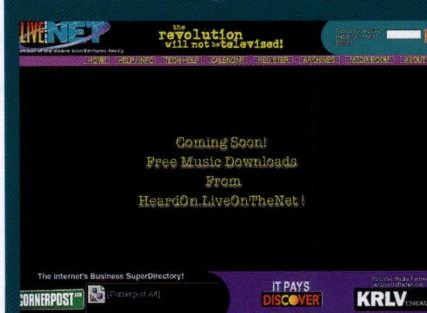


SCOUR.NET *www.scour.net*
Top dog among the Net's MP3 search engines.

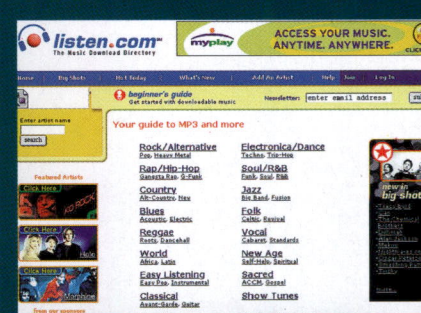
EMUSIC *www.emusic.com*
An MP3 superstore where you can buy albums or tracks from some big-name bands.



AUDIOGALAXY *www.audiogalaxy.com*
Reviews, MP3 searches and free hosting for musicians.



PLATINUM RECORDS *www.heardon.com*
You'll soon be able to download Platinum's entire back catalogue for free.



LISTEN.COM *www.listen.com*
The first site to try and catalogue all the legal downloadable music on the Net.

MP3 JUKEBOX JURY

You know where to get hold of the music – but is it worth hearing? We locked three music professionals in a darkened hotel room to listen to a laptop's worth of MP3 hopefuls...

AC PLAYA DREAMS

Super-smooth hip-hop in a Snoop stylee

EMMA This guy's from north London, isn't he? It's a bit Ali G – 'big shout to the Staines massive!' But it's good that you can get this kind of stuff on the Net, as no-one will play this on national radio. It's a bit like the new pirate radio.

JAKE The only time I hear this kind of music is four in the morning getting in a cab. But it could do really well in the States.

WARREN I can't really get past his mock American accent. But I agree, it could work in the US.

EMMA 👎 **JAKE** 👍 **WARREN** 👍

BABELTREE GEEBEES

Back-to-basics lo-fi tune with a great clap-along chorus

J Wow! It sounds a bit like early Harry Nilsson. I'm astounded that this is so acoustic – being a bit new to the Net, I thought the only music you'd hear would be all robotic.

W It sounds pretty good, but there's a bit in the middle of the song where it goes all ELO – but then every new band has a tendency to get a bit silly.

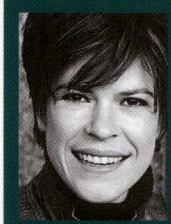
E Urgh! There's a horrible drum sound in there – sort it out!

J I like that actually. It takes a lot of time to get a drum to sound that bad. It's too long – that's why they need a good A&R man who could tell them why the song's not quite there yet.

W It's so long it'd take about an hour to download! You'd want to go and see these live, though.

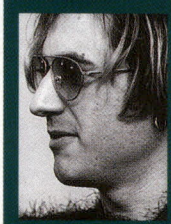
EMMA 👎 **JAKE** 👎 **WARREN** 👎

THE JURY



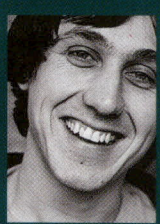
EMMA B

Radio One's hottest new DJ, tipped to be the 'next Jo Whiley'. Plenty of music biz experience, having worked for Creation Records, which meant dealing with Noel and Liam on a daily basis.



JAKE SHILLINGFORD

Lead singer with glam-pop lotharios My Life Story, who recently lost their string section for synths. MLS were also one of the first signed British bands to release an Internet-only single.



WARREN BRAMLEY

Factory Records' A&R specialist, constantly on the prowl for the 'next big thing'. Previous Factory acts include Happy Mondays, New Order/Joy Division and, of course, Northside.

HIT 👍 **MISS** 👎 **MAYBE** 👈

FANTASMAGROOVER MODELLING MUST PAY WELL

Anthemic rocker with funny lyrics about leaving your missus for a supermodel

W The vocals are like Brian Molko (Placebo singer).

J I'm not sure this really works – it has all these comedy words, but he's singing it in a really heart-felt way. And, looking at his picture, he must be using a bit of artistic license to say he's going out with a model.

E Good drum sounds there. God, does it show that I'm married to a drummer? It might be a bit generic, but then no-one complains when Muse come along and sound like Radiohead.

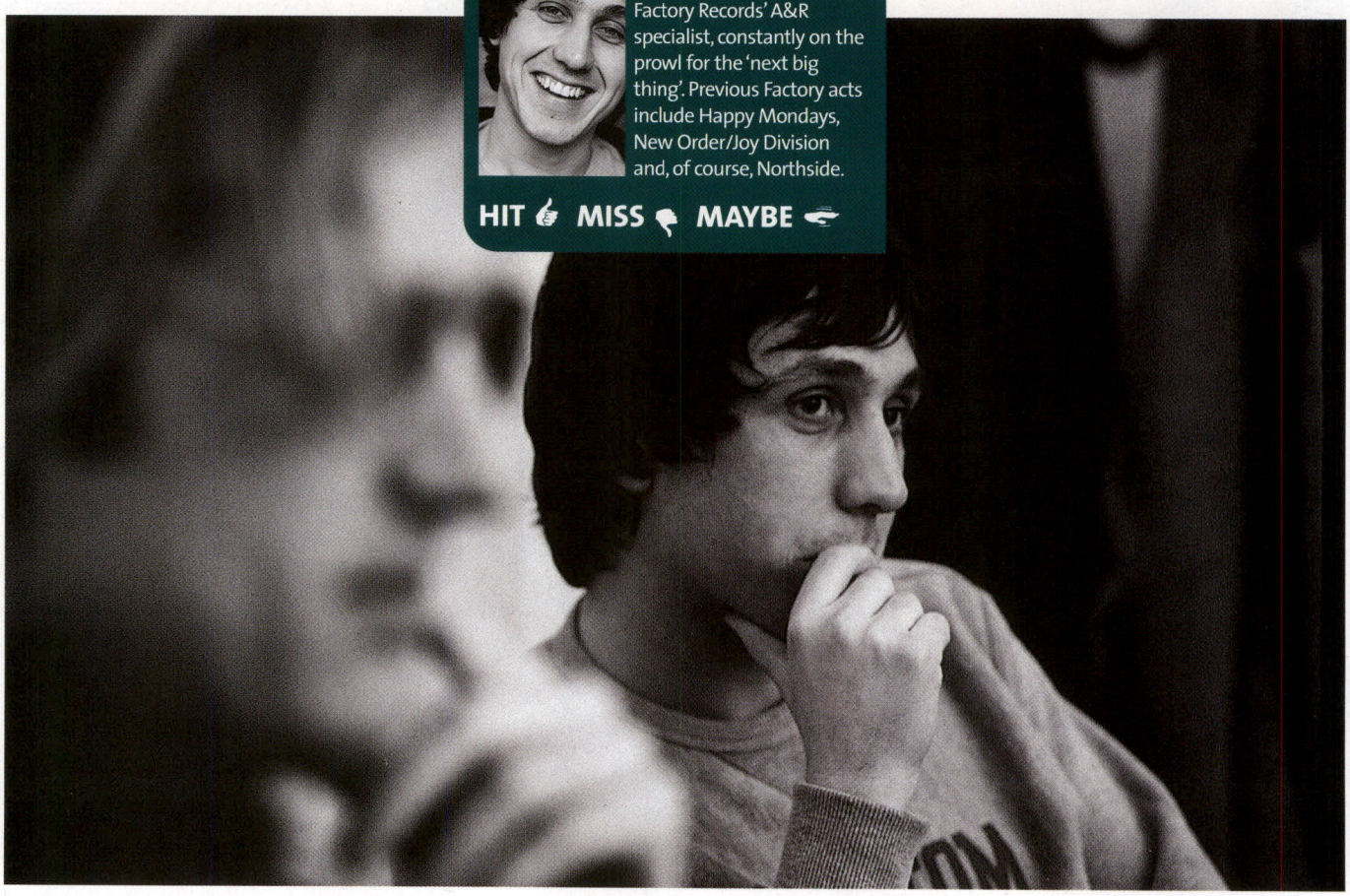
W It's not going to cause a musical revolution, put it that way.

EMMA 👍 **JAKE** 👎 **WARREN** 👎

OBLIGATO ANGIE

Gentle reggae pop tune you can imagine playing in the background of *Jamaica Uncovered*

J I'm back in that cab again! It doesn't really work sitting here in



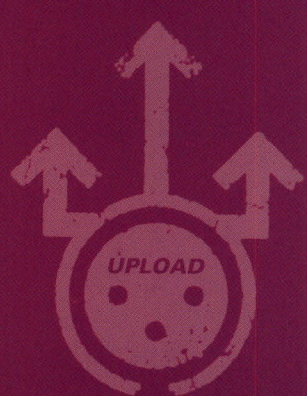
WORDS: JOHN MULLEN; JURY PICTURES: HUGO DIXON

dotmusic.com
click here
if it's music you're after, go straight to no.1
www.dotmusic.com
dotmusic
the insider's guide

Are you in a band, a DJ, do you make any kind of music?

With the tools BT gives you at getoutthere.bt.com, you can upload your tracks onto the net. They'll be heard by thousands, reviewed by your peers and judged in competitions by industry names, including Seb Fontaine and the Freestylers – with prizes to further the most promising talent.

Give your music the chance it deserves. Get out there.



getoutthere.bt.com BT

'It's good you get this stuff on the Net. It's the new pirate radio'

a hotel in London, but if I was hopping around somewhere sunny on holiday it would sound brilliant.

E It reminds me of Musical Youth. I used to go to school with them. You could imagine hearing this on some calypso compilation, or at the opening of that Tom Cruise film *Cocktail*. It's not badly put together at all.

W People buy this stuff; it does sell. Maybe not to me personally, but then I don't like Puff Daddy, and he sells millions of records.

EMMA 👍 **JAKE** 👍 **WARREN** 👍

PARANOIA
THE SUMMER CLUB EXTENDED

Seven-minute trance epic that's more Alice Deejay than Underworld

J This is exactly the kind of music my neighbours play all the time. It's a bit like *Good Life* by Inner City.

E That synth sound is great – it just makes you want to get up and dance (Emma now shows off her 'heavy shopping' trance dance). Dance music is perfect for the Internet, 'cause it's faceless and you don't need to know who's making the music.

W This song would be perfect if you had some MP3 decks.

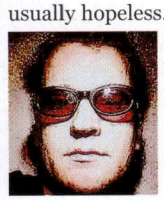
E It's a shame it doesn't have any vocals. It's the sort of song that could go Top 10 if it had some silly words like DJ Jean's *The Launch*.

EMMA 👍 **JAKE** 👍 **WARREN** 👍

PSYCHO DYNAMICS 3 WORDS

Heart-tugging guitar rock, a bit like U2 before they went all 'ironic'

E I'm sick to death of records that start slow. Bands do it so you can hear the lyrics, which are usually hopeless.



W It sounds a bit like Bryan Adams to me.

E It's the most memorable song so far, though. It has a lovely melody that really sticks in your head.

J Yeah, you can imagine a publisher really wanting to put out this song.

EMMA 👍 **JAKE** 👍 **WARREN** 👎

STRANGELOOP ANOTHER PLACE

An unusual track that begins with a chill-out vibe before suddenly becoming a full-on dance stomper

E That gentle voice at the start of the song is like that Orb track *Little Fluffy Clouds*.

J This sounds as if it was created about 10 years ago. Actually, I suppose it might've been made that long ago, it's just that the guy's only got the technology to let people hear it now! It sounds so out of date it could be used as background music on Richard and Judy.

W A bit of a mess, all told.

EMMA 👎 **JAKE** 👎 **WARREN** 👎

TWO-GOAL CUSHION TREADING WATER

Aching ballad that features a slightly controversial line about owning a 'bag of weed'

E (Mishearing the band's name) Two Gold Cushion? What's that then?

J No, it's Two-Goal Cushion, like Vasco Da Gama had over Manchester United.

W This is okay, but it's not really new. I think there's much more diverse stuff on the Web than this.

J But what I like is that it's not as complete as the other tracks – they still have room to develop, if they had the right support. And that line about 'a bag of weed' might just be an advert for Baby Bio or Homebase.

EMMA 👎 **JAKE** 👍 **WARREN** 👎

NOW *YOU* VOTE!

You can hear the tracks reviewed here by visiting our Web site, ***www.thenetmag.co.uk***, or ***www.peoplesound.com***.

Thanks to Peoplesound – the UK and Europe's number one new music download site, with over 2,000 new acts accessed by music fans and the music industry alike – for their help with this feature.

Retail therapy

This month we have a few suggestions for Valentine's Day – plus, er, a skateboard

Diamond earrings £99

Tell the lady in your life you're getting her some carats this Valentine's Day, then watch her face as you present her with these white gold studs (guffaw). Ice Cool will deliver the 0.1 carat earrings the next working day, and postage within the UK is free.
www.icecool.co.uk

Skateboard £117

If you can handle the 'graphically intensive' site (that's what it says, anyway), get creative and construct your own board from the various components on offer. Clothing and accessories are also sold; p&p is free.
www.legends-surf-shops.co.uk

Salt & pepper pots £27.50

Brighten up your table (or TV tray) with Alessi's magnetic salt and pepper shakers. Classic and collectable design for £27.50 with free delivery within 48 hours at ***www.maelstrom.co.uk***

Ferrari jacket £140

Pretend to observers that you really *can* afford the car by wearing this jacket; made with performance coated cotton, it'll keep you dry during even the fiercest storms. Goods are shipped from the UK: p&p is between £3.50 and £12.50 and allow 28 days for delivery.
www.ferrari.it

Nut Fish £4.95

Enhance your home with this tasteful and elegant nut dispenser, gracefully designed in the shape of a fish. Available from ***www.barmans.co.uk***; delivery in three days.

Pub in a Box £15.95

Be the envy of your mates with this box-shaped hostelry. Just supply your own beer! £1.95 p&p. ***www.barmans.co.uk***

Bra and panties $57

At last – America's superlative high street lingerie emporium, Victoria's Secret, is online. A huge range of underwear plus perfumes and various lotions are available from this chic and sexy site. Delivery (prices vary) is within days. ***www.victoriassecret.com***

Flat Eric £16.97

The star of the recent Levi's campaign became something of a cult hero himself and stole the show. Is he perfection? He's cool, cuddly – and won't irritate with inane conversation. ***www.etoys.co.uk*** offers delivery in three to six days for £2.50.

Flip-flops $10 & Boxers $15

This US site is devoted to Spam – the delicious meaty variety. We particularly liked these flip-flops which leave an imprint of the word in the sand, and the boxer shorts ($15) complete with glow-in-the-dark logo. Superb. ***www.spam.com***; delivery is in two to three weeks and charges vary.

THE NET'S TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

Keep to our simple guidelines, and there's no reason why online shopping should end in a puddle of tears

■ CHECK THE SITE IS SECURE A small padlock will appear in the bottom left of your browser to show that you can safely send credit card details through the site. Your Web browser will also tell you whether a site is secure or not when you enter it.

■ SHOP WITH BRAND-NAME COMPANIES As with any shopping, you're better off with a company you've actually heard of.

■ CHECK DELIVERY TIMES AND CHARGES Companies should tell you the delivery charge if there is one on their site. If you live in the Highlands and Islands or Ireland, you may find that free delivery does not apply.

■ NEVER SEND ANYTHING BY EMAIL If a site asks for card details by email, don't oblige. It's far, far easier for emails to be intercepted.

■ PRINT THE CONTRACT This is the only permanent record of your purchase, so make sure you keep it, along with your order number and other details. Don't forget: if it's a UK site, you have the same consumer rights as you do in the High Street.

■ IF IT GOES WRONG, DON'T WORRY Contrary to scare stories, online shopping is safer and very often cheaper than traditional methods – and it's in the online store's interest to sort any problems out quickly.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WRIGHT

RAC Trackstar

It isn't about taking part.

Trying to beat a car thief can be like playing chess with one piece against someone who has a whole army of pieces, who can perform any number of illegal moves - and who knows all your moves in advance.

Hardly surprising, then, that a car is stolen in the UK every 70 seconds.

Worse still, the chances of you, the owner, seeing it again are only 50:50.

But RAC Trackstar restacks the odds heavily in your favour.

RAC Trackstar is a grand master at returning cars to their rightful owners. It's a high-tech, intelligent tracking system using satellite positioning and telematics to keep tabs on your car.

You don't have to be an RAC member to have it fitted. And you don't have to have be a chess tactician to understand how it works.

A small transmitter is installed in one of 47 possible secret locations in your car. If the car is stolen, the transmitter sends a signal to the RAC-Trackstar National Control Centre, which is manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The signal can be activated automatically, or by you reporting the theft to the Control Centre. Then the centre immediately contacts the police.

Every 20 seconds, the National Control Centre receives an update on the car's exact location, speed and direction of travel. The information is relayed to the police, who can follow out of sight of the stolen car. So no need for dangerous, high-speed pursuits, and no need for the stolen vehicle to be near a small number of specially-equipped police cars.

Because the transmitter signal is silent and invisible, the thief won't know he's being followed. It's only when he parks up and is arrested that he'll realise he's been playing against a grand master.

Checkmate to you. And for the criminal, check in at one of Her Majesty's hotels.

It's about winning

For more information about RAC Trackstar, call

0808 1009991

or visit **www.ractrackstar.com**

Once installed, RAC Trackstar costs from £8 per month

www.you'vegottobejoking/there'snoway
i'mpaying£10,500forthatcar_justwhatdo
youtakemefor/somekindofmoron.com

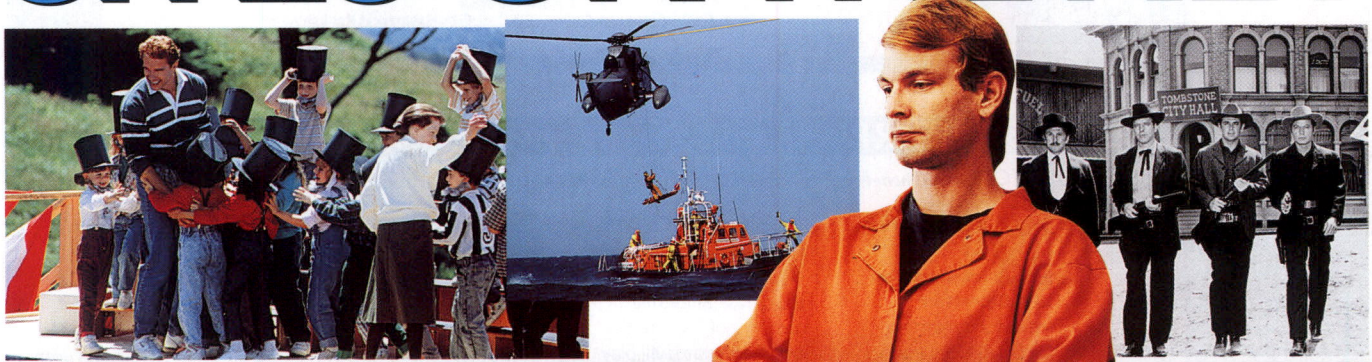
For more than 26 years What Car? has driven, tested and rated every new car on the market. And we've also "Mystery Shopped" every type of new and used car outlet from Belgium to Blackpool to find the best prices and most reliable service. Our impartial ratings and valuations give you the information you need to make a wise decision and get a better price. Log onto What Car? Online and take control of the car buying process.

WHAT CAR? ONLINE
www.whatcar.co.uk

what website?

March 2000

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE FITTEST, FUNKIEST SITES ON THE NET



GENTLEMEN – CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS!

SHOW ME THE SITES...

What Website?

MARCH

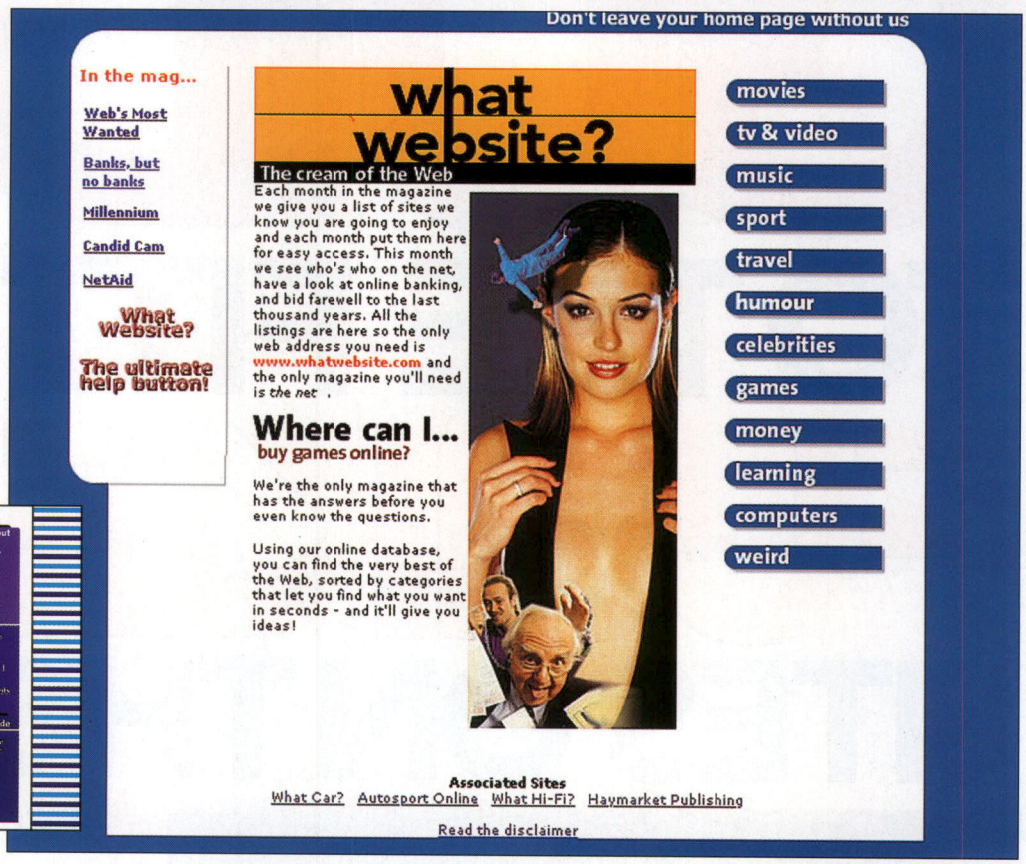
thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

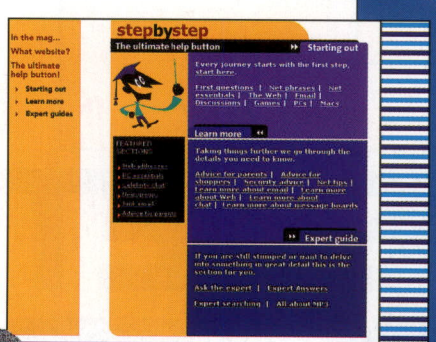
The joys of spring are nearly upon us (well, on the horizon anyway) and what better way of preparing yourself than going online to visit these blossoming sites? What Website? is full of good ideas for you to check out – plus you can visit our Web site (below)

www.whatwebsite.com

EVERY LINK ON ONE GREAT SITE!

Tired of typing in addresses to get to the great sites listed in this month's magazine? There's only one URL to remember: ***www.whatwebsite.com***, where every one of our hundreds of recommended Web sites is just a click away!





THE FREE SOFTWARE STARTER PACK

THE ULTIMATE HELP BUTTON ***www.thenetmag.co.uk/helpbutton*** Our guide has all the essential free software reviewed and rated with links

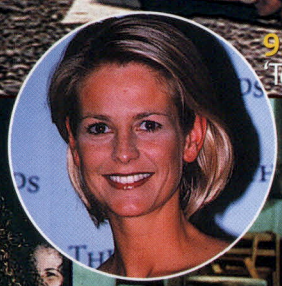
PLAYING MULTIMEDIA BROWSER WATCH
browserwatch.internet.com/plug-in.html
A comprehensive list of browser plug-ins.

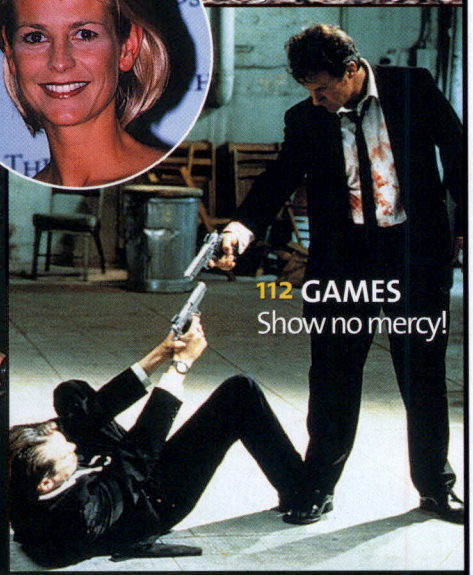
REALPLAYER G2
www.real.com
Cross-platform free software for streaming movie (RealVideo) and audio (RealAudio) files across the Internet.

QUICKTIME 4.0
www.apple.com/quicktime
Version 4 of this multi-media software will play just about anything, including MP3 files.

MICROSOFT MEDIAPLAYER
www.microsoft.com/mediaplayer
Plays streaming audio and video files saved in the MediaPlayer format.

SHOCKWAVE & FLASH
www.shockwave.com
A must-have if you want to enjoy sound, great animation effects and even natty games on Web sites.





PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION, RETNA, REX, MOVIESTORE COLLECTION

THE LISTINGS

MARCH 2000

NEW MOVIE RELEASES 82
Toy Story 2 saves the day as Leonardo dishes up a turkey

MOVIES HORROR 84
Our choice of spine-tinglers

TELEVISION 87
The best TV on the Web

NEW ALBUM RELEASES 88
Those slippery Eels are back...

MUSIC CROONERS 90
Music to slip between the sheets to

SPORT 92
Become a black belt in your chosen discipline with the help of our guide

CELEBRITIES 95
Meet the weather men and women

TRAVEL 96
Our round-up of action holidays

MONEY 99
The best insurance deals online

HEALTH 101
For the ultimate new you: surgery!

COMEDY 105
Formby, Wisdom, the Pythons – are their Web sites any good?

STYLE & FASHION 106
Some fab sites to check out, sweetie

LEARNING 108
L-plate hell

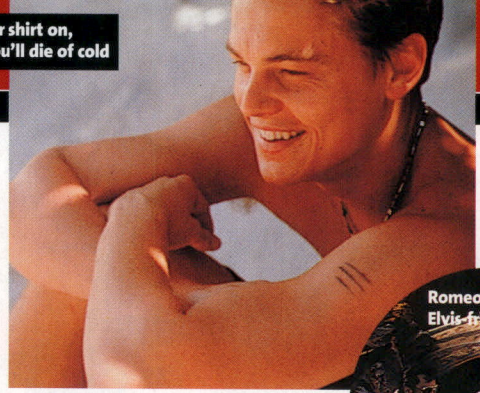
KIDS 111
Attention-span problem solvers

GAMES 112
Hunt down the best shoot-em-ups with our guide to the gore

HISTORY 115
Discover the real Wild West

WEIRD 116
Everything you ever wanted to know about serial killers

NEED TO KNOW 118
Let us guide you through the funfest that is the Web



Triumph of the toy box

MOVIE RELEASES Marshall Julius gets his teeth into Leo, attacks Anjelica but gets a buzz from Buzz

Agnes Brown

Anjelica Huston, Marion O'Dwyer, Ray Winstone ★

Huston proves, as director of this ill-conceived chick-flick, that she has inherited none of her father's ability, knocking out a superficial, artificial and old-fashioned waste of film. *Agnes Brown* tells the story of a recently widowed mum of seven (played by Huston – who else?) struggling to get by in 60s Ireland. Failing to inspire genuine emotion, this is little more than a collection of soft-boiled Irish stereotypes.

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/2844/huston.html *A loyal fan's tribute to Anjelica Huston.*

A Room For Romeo Brass

Andrew Shim, Gavin Woolley, Paddy Considine ★★★★★

Twelve-year-olds Shim and Woolley, friends despite their wildly different temperaments, experience trouble in kiddie paradise when grown-up Considine (a cross between Alan Partridge and Norman Bates) comes between them. Believable and perfectly scripted, with an enthusiastic cast, *A Room...* is at times both funny and disturbing. Don't miss it.

uk.imdb.com/Title?0202559 *Read reviews and get more background information on the film.*

The Beach

Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert Carlyle, Tilda Swinton ★★

Fox has kept a tight lid on this one, afraid to let the critics at it since advance word is that it stinks like a dead dog in a desert. So at time of going to press we still hadn't seen Danny Boyle's adaptation of Alex Garland's trouble-in-hippie-paradise adventure. Was it worth destroying that Thai beach? All signs point to no.

thaistudents.com/thebeach/ *Catch up on the latest arguments about this controversial film.*

WHAT THE SITES ARE SAYING

	aint-it-cool-news.com	cinematter.com	eonline.com	film.com	moviereviews.org	salon.com
Cider House Rules	👍	👎	👍	👎	👎	👎
The Green Mile	👍	👎	👎	👎	👎	👍
Three Kings	👎	👎	👍	👍	👎	👎
Topsy Turvy	👍	👎	👎	👍	👎	👎
Toy Story 2	👍	👍	👍	👍	👍	👍

PICTURES: MOVIESTORE COLLECTION

Body Shots

Jerry O'Connell, Brad Rowe, Sean Patrick Flannery ★★

A bunch of self-obsessed American twentysomethings bang on about their sex lives – as if we give a damn – in this voyeuristic drama. A night of debauchery is seen through the eyes of various jocks, creeps and bimbos, boozing, fighting and screwing their way through LA. An accusation of rape fails to add weight to the proceedings, but there's welcome comic relief from *Swingers*' Ron Livingstone, the movie's one bright spark.

www.bodyshotsmovie.com *A bit like Beverly Hills 90210, and as self-important as the movie.*

'And this is me in *The Black Windmill*'

Cider House Rules

Michael Caine, Tobey Maguire, Charlize Theron ★★★★

Genuinely touching, warm-hearted drama from master of the genre Lasse Hallstrom, director of *My Life As A Dog* and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*. Tobey Maguire, who seems to be in every other movie these days, plays a young lad who, having grown up in an orphanage under the wing of mentor and father figure Michael Caine, a pro-choice doctor doing what he can in 40s America, heads out into the world to see what life is all about. You'll be blubbing by the end, just you see.

www.miramax.com *Detailed and informative. Like being at a nightclub, just not as much fun.*

Toy Story 2

Tom Hanks, Tim Allen, Kelsey Grammer ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Fans of Buzz and Woody's original adventure, as well as creepy-crawly classic *A Bug's Life*, can expect a further leap forward from master animators Pixar, who work their computer-generated magic on this enchanting new tale. Buzz, Hamm, Rex and the rest leave the safety of Andy's room to rescue Woody from the clutches of a greedy toy collector in this inventive, exciting and hilarious sequel.

disney.go.com/worldsofdisney/toystory2 *The official site is essentially an in-depth shopping experience. As plastic as the cast.*

CLASSIC MOVIE

HEATHERS

Winona Ryder, Christian Slater, Shannen Doherty (1989)

Long before *Hudson Hawk*, when the future looked rosy for director Michael Lehmann, *Heathers* marked a high in filmmaking that still retains its edge. Eager to bump off some unpleasant students, twisted Jack Nicholson-wannabe Slater and accomplice Ryder slay their way through high school until events spiral out of control. Hilarious and demented, it may yet spawn a sequel.

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Bungalow/2204/ ***Superb collection of trivia, cast details and sequel news.***

Three Kings

George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Ice Cube ★★★★

A thoughtful and darkly funny tale of modern US soldiers doing what comes naturally: screwing up. With the Gulf War over and rumours of Saddam's booty hidden in bunkers across Iraq, four of America's finest pull a treasure map from an enemy soldier and set off in search of gold. Capturing the anarchy of the time and refusing to make heroes or villains out of any of the characters, this is much more honest than your average war flick.

www.three-kings.com *Nothing to see other than a poster of the film... so far.*

Three Kings: four stars

'What's Caine up to now?'

The Green Mile

Tom Hanks, David Morse, Michael Clarke Duncan ★★★★

From Frank Darabont, director of perfect prison flick *The Shawshank Redemption*, comes a second tale of life behind bars, based, like the first, on a story by Stephen King. A Depression-era Death Row drama set in the South, the movie focuses on the relationship between the head guard (Hanks) and a colossal inmate (Duncan) with divine healing powers. Despite the film's excessive length – 189 minutes – it remains a moving and sometimes shocking experience, impeccably made and played by all.

www.thegreenmile.com *Impressive looking and in-depth site. Not too busy to look at, and easy to use.*

Rear Window

James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Raymond Burr ★★★★★

Classic suspense from Alfred Hitchcock's golden age: an ingenious, atmospheric tribute to voyeurism made long before Neighbourhood Watch schemes encouraged us all to spy on one another. As a wheelchair-bound photographer with nothing much to do, Stewart passes the time snooping on his neighbours, growing increasingly suspicious of a big, scary bloke whose wife mysteriously vanishes. As Hitch himself said: 'If you do not experience delicious terror... then pinch yourself – you are most probably dead.'

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/9766/window.html *A brilliant guide to the golden years of classic cinema.*

Topsy Turvy

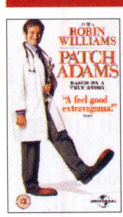
Jim Broadbent, Allan Corduner, Timothy Spall ★★

While Gilbert and Sullivan devotees are in for a treat, the rest of us are likely to be less than ecstatic about this overlong, insubstantial period piece detailing the creation of the musical duo's ambitious *The Milkado*. *Topsy Turvy* marks a major change of direction for Mike Leigh, a director more at home with bitter-sweet social commentary, and though the film is – occasionally – really quite charming, it is first and foremost a self-indulgent slog.

www.britmovie.co.uk/genres/drama/filmography/034.html *Don't expect any bells and whistles, just the synopsis and credits. Bland.*

They've got it taped

VIDEO RELEASES Films to rent, buy or bin this month



PATCH ADAMS

Robin Williams, Monica Potter

Another painful Robin Williams movie; predictable and sentimental. Williams is a doctor who promotes clowning, risking his career by pushing laughter over medicine. Horrible.

www.patchadams.com

THIS YEAR'S LOVE

Kathy Burke, Ian Hart, Jennifer Ehle

Brit-flick following six young North London types. It's fun for quite a while, but strong characters and a bunch of good one-liners can't make up for the flimsy plot.

www.wow.ie/film/frevo113.htm

THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR

Pierce Brosnan, Rene Russo

Hollow remake of the stylish 60s caper movie: playboy Brosnan steals for kicks, investigator Russo fancies the pants off him. All flash, no substance. ***www.mgm.com/thethomascrownaffair***

PSYCHO

Vince Vaughn, Anne Heche

Director Gus Van Sant continues to waste his talent with this pointless, shot-by-shot remake/rip-off of Hitchcock's slasher classic. The most unnecessary film ever made.

www.psychomovie.com

Not even death could rid Vlad of his arthritis

'Will it be the usual trim, Mr Reed?'

Don't go down to the cellar...

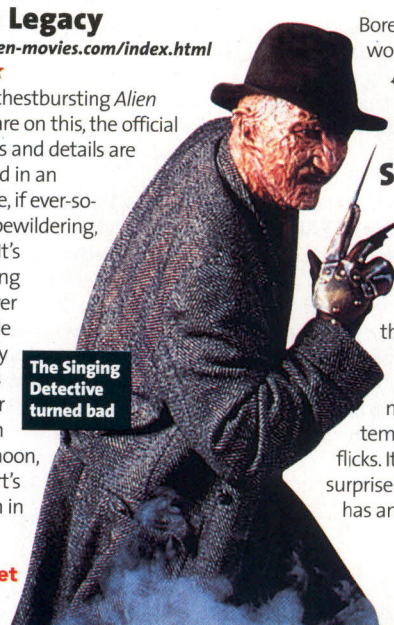
HORROR If being frightened is your idea of fun, take a trip round the scariest horror classics of all time

Alien Legacy

www.alien-movies.com/index.html

★★★★

All four chestbursting *Alien* movies are on this, the official site: plots and details are explained in an attractive, if ever-so-slightly bewildering, fashion. It's fascinating to discover that while Sigourney Weaver's character was born on the moon, John Hurt's was born in Borehamwood. Who would have thought it?



The Singing Detective turned bad

A Nightmare on Elm Street

www.nightmareonelmstreet.com

★★★★

A slick official site embracing the cult that was the seven-film Freddy phenomenon – movies that set the template for teen-slasher flicks. It'll come as no surprise to learn that the site has an extensive store, and more than enough info on the cinematic deaths to keep Krueger fans satisfied.

The Blair Witch Project

www.blairwitch.com ★★★★★

You know the score – this excellent site helped lend credence to the belief that the whole thing was true. Sadly, it's now been somewhat spoiled by the hand of commercialism: clicking on pictures offers you the chance to purchase such delightful goods as a 'stainless steel flask and cigarette case combo'. Now that *is* scary.

Carrie & Rachel

firecracker.simplenet.com/carrie&rachel/ ★★★★

The first, and still one of the best, Stephen King adaptations is

Contestants got even with Harriot

Halloween

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.halloweenmovies.com ★★★★★

The low-budget chiller that made John Carpenter's name is lovingly dissected here, as are its five sequels and the recent *Halloween H20*. There are the usual panoply of features – a map of the fictional town, an interactive script and lists of location shoots and murder victims – but what marks this site out are the exclusive interviews with dozens of key members of both cast and crew. An inspired site for an inspirational film.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: KOBAL, MOVIESTORE

covered here; unfortunately so is the astoundingly unoriginal sequel, *The Rage*, starring Carrie's half-sister Rachel. So steer well clear of that section and explore a well laid-out site which avoids the usual horror trappings (titles in blood, etc) and rewards further reading. It's a shame about the Webmaster's stream-of-consciousness 'Thoughts' page, though.

The Exorcist Directory

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Heights/9850/exorcisthome.html
★★★
A tribute to the 70s horror, which was banned in the UK until recently as a 'video nasty'. Its age means it boasts a relatively low gore factor, but this site is still well worth a look. It manages to cover all the bases and is excellent on the battles between the director and the writer, but has disappointingly

Carrie: calm down, love

Zombies: hungry

few mentions of pea soup.

Hammer House of Horror

www.fortunecity.com/lavendar/judidench/339/ ★★★
Loving tribute to the great British studio that churned out shlock horrors for decades. It's not the most attractively designed of sites – the writing is tiny and the dripping blood gets everywhere – but there's a lot to read about Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and associates. It's a pity a few of the links are dead. We wonder if they died horribly...

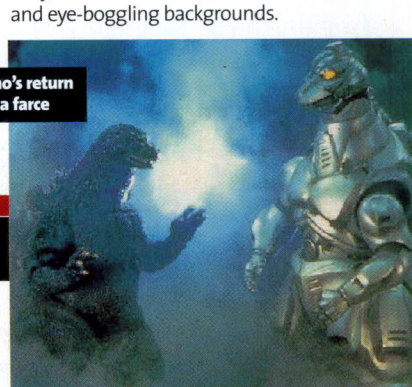
'Give me a third star or I shoot!'

Homepage of the Dead

www.homepageofthedead.com
★★★
Back in 1968, George A Romero's low-budget *Night of the Living Dead* shocked moviegoers with its gory representations of killer zombies. This site covers the whole trilogy (*Night..., Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*) with necessary respect, relaying rumours of remakes and further instalments like *Dusk of the Dead* – although *Lunchtime of the Dead* might have been a better title.

Scream

www.geocities.com/Area51/Zone/1769/s_revenge2.html
★★★★
Kevin *Dawson's Creek* Williamson revived the genre with this cine-literate slasher; there are several sites dedicated to the entire trilogy, but this one is the most comprehensive. There are several dark corners concealing not lurking psychopaths but entertaining snippets, but be warned: it's very busy, full of multicoloured words and eye-boggling backgrounds.


Bruno's return was a farce

best movies sites ★★★★★

where can I...

GET LATEST NEWS AND RELEASE DATES?

www.popcorn.co.uk
British perspective on new releases.
aint-it-cool-news.com
Gives the inside track on new films.
filmunlimited.co.uk
The Guardian's latest big-screen behemoth comes alive.
uk.imdb.com
The bible of online film.

DECIDE WHAT TO SEE?

www.salon.com/ent/movies
The best reviews on the Web.
www.filmreview.co.uk
A review site to rival the Americans.
www.beatboxbetty.com
Innovative attempt at spicing up film reviews by introducing a 'character'.
film.com
Informative news and reviews.

FIND OFFICIAL FILM SITES?

www.filmfour.com
Details on the TV channel, including the latest C4 films in production.
www.foxmovies.com
Links to all 20th Century Fox releases.
www.movies.warnerbros.com
WB's new films and lost classics.
www.universalstudios.com/universal_pictures/
Retrospectives on great movies and clips of new releases.

SEARCH FOR OBSCURE FILMS AND SCRIPTS?

www.script-o-rama.com
Read rejected scripts for well-known films as well as transcripts of more obscure ones.
www.ohthehumanity.com
The worst movies of all time, lovingly detailed.
www.badmovies.org
The best (worst?) B movies ever.

Does it get any worse than this? See badmovies.org

www.losman.com/fod.htm
A site dedicated to cinematic deaths. Nice.

FIND A CINEMA?

www.ticketlinks.co.uk
An excellent portal for film screenings.
www.virgin.net/cinema/index.html
Enter a name to get locations and pithy reviews.

www.odeon.co.uk
Book online, or peruse the latest flick information.
cinema.scoot.co.uk
From those people who are behind the directory.

BUY OR RENT VIDEOS?

www.reel.com
DVDs and videos on the cheap.
www.blackstar.co.uk
Discounts, DVDs and charts.
www.filmsite.org/greatlists.html
The mother of all film lists.
www.blockbuster.co.uk
As it suggests: the site of the shop.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.horror
Quite possibly the scariest newsgroup on the Net.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Join a *Scream* role-playing game by visiting Screamfic at ***www.escribe.com/games/screamfic/***

GET CHATTING?

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Cinema/3199/
A chat room for the Halloween series. Gory.

CRAP FOREIGN HORROR

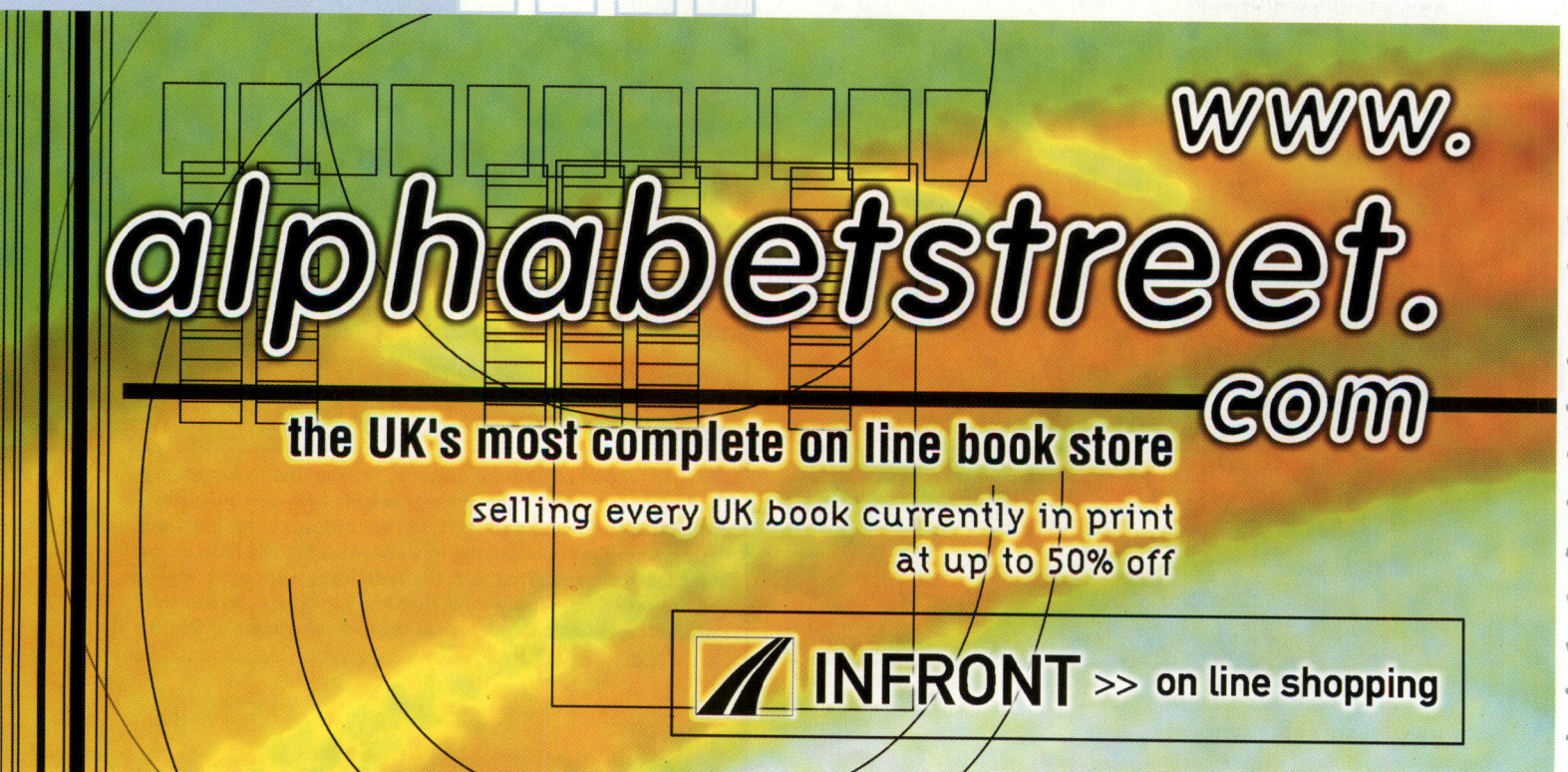
Ooh, I'm scared

For every genuinely terrifying film there's a whole host of terrible ones, and we can assure you we're not being xenophobic when we say they tend to come from overseas. Maybe there's something in the Japanese psyche which makes Godzilla (*www.stomptokyo.com/godzillatemple/index.htm*) so scary, but we Brits are simply left wondering when Godzuki is going to show his cute little face, or the giant moth appears. That said, the Americans went big-budget on the fire-breathing reptile – but then the Yanks also gave us the unforgettable *Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death*...

www.
dvdstreet.
com

the UK's greatest on line DVD store

selling every region 2 DVD at up to 50% off
free delivery in the UK



'Welcome to BBC News 24'

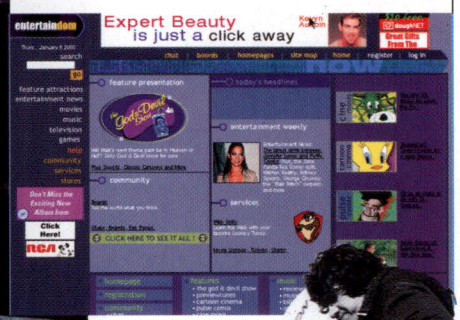
WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: SCOPE

Entaindom

www.entertaindom.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

An Internet tutorial from the Looney Toon characters – now that's got to earn top marks. This new offering from Warner gives us all manner of entertainment. On the TV side you can see cartoons, retro music videos, plus links to movie clips. And that's not all, folks: check out Previewstunes, the online source for new releases and sneak previews.



There's still nothing on

WEB TV If 100 cable channels don't satisfy your appetite for lousy entertainment, you can now watch television programmes on the Net

Sadly, the big toe docu-soap flopped

M2

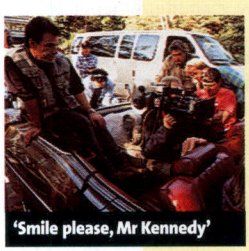
www.m2europe.com ★★★

Not quite the same as sitting slumped in front of the telly watching pop videos all day, but this goes some way to bringing the sound of MTV to your desktop. M2 offers some of the most popular songs played on the station along with interviews and features, which included a film especially made for M2 by cutting-edge animator Run Wrake when we dropped by. You can choose your 'dream hour' of M2 music and, if it's really good, they might broadcast it.

Ministry of Sound

www.ministryofsound.com ★★★★★

James 'Disco' Davis will 'breeze through clubland to keep you in the know about hip happenings'. Phew, that's a relief, then. This is just a small part of an exceptional site with regular programming from nights out at top UK clubs – and you can visit them all from your desktop.



'Smile please, Mr Kennedy'

VirtueTV

www.virtuetv.com ★★★★

Choose from such documentaries as 'the history of the bikini' to how-tos on Mexican cuisine, with news, business and classic movies all thrown in, too. VirtueTV has a range of channels, but best of all is its music and live gigs from acts such as Travis, Gomez, and Fatboy Slim all archived for your pleasure.

Yahoo! Broadcast

www.broadcast.com ★★★★

Formerly Broadcast.com, this is now part of Yahoo! and is dedicated to Net audio and video broadcasts. There's a directory, search facility and highlights of live events. Great for searching out TV content.

best TV sites ★★★★★ where can I...

FIND PROGRAMME GUIDES FOR POPULAR SHOWS?

www.fox.com

From *Party of Five* to *The Simpsons*, start here for your US faves.

www.episodeguides.com

And there's plenty more here, from the *A-Team* to *Xena*.

LOOK UP A TV PERSONALITY?

www.pathfinder.com/people/web/index.html

People magazine's speciality is B-list celebs.

www.nyt.co.uk/celebrit.htm

Need a famous person? Go here to book a Brit celebrity.

FIND TV NOSTALGIA?

www.metronet.co.uk/cultv

A celebration of such favourites as *The Prisoner* and *The Saint*.

www.classictelevision.com

Interesting articles and plenty of links in this online magazine.

Meet a useful fellow couch potato here at www.g-wizz.net

FIND TV LISTINGS?

www.g-wizz.net

A Couch Potato to help sort your TV.

www.digiguide.co.uk

Customised guide to British telly.

FIND TV INFO?

tv.cream.org

Great resource for long-dead shows.

www.ultimatetv.com

US-influenced; links to shows.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/7094/They're back, so head for the *X-Files* newsgroup resource here.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Interested in the bits before and after shows (ie the test card)? Mail ***mailserver@meldrum.co.uk*** with 'subscribe mhp-chat' in the message.

GET CHATTING

Chat at ***www.beef-cake.com/interactive/chat/index.html*** – the home of South Park 'crap'.

Looking for more Television sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

Eels like teen spirit

NEW RELEASES John Mullen casts a critical eye over the latest musical offerings

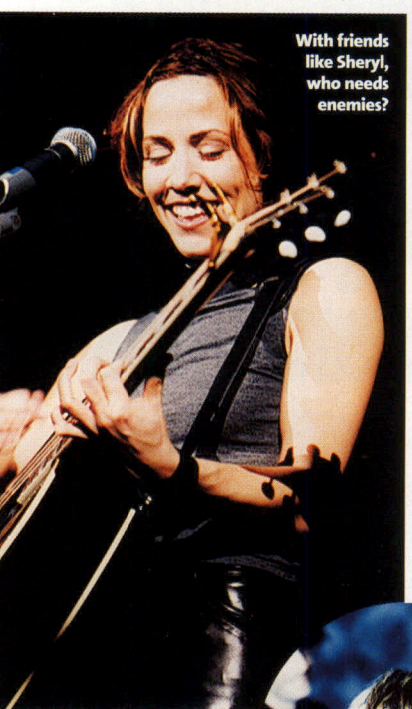
The Gallagher/ Albarn gene fusion was a success

Sheryl Crow & Friends

Live From Central Park

A&M ★★

The emphasis is very much on the '& Friends', because there are so many celeb cameos you wonder why Ms Crow bothered to turn up. Eric Clapton, Chrissie Hynde, Dixie Chicks... the list is scarily endless. Even if you actually like songs like *If It Makes You Happy*, they're somehow less enjoyable after an anonymous session muso has tacked on a 12-minute guitar solo. Best avoided.



With friends like Sheryl, who needs enemies?

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Club/4768/sherylcrow.html Features stories of inspiration and deep interpretations of her songs by fans. Be afraid.

Crowded House

After Glow

CAPITOL ★★★★

The band for whom the phrase 'Oh, I didn't know they wrote that song' seems most apt. This long overdue return is packed full of songs that will slowly seep into your skin and make you wonder how you ever managed to live without this bunch of Kiwis, especially the surprisingly touching *My Telly's Gone Bung*.

The Finns: related

www.etext.org/Mailing.Lists/house/finnformation.html Everything you could possibly want to know about the Finn brothers. And much more besides.

ALBUM OF THE MONTH

Eels *Daisies for the Galaxy*

DREAMWORKS ★★★★★

The last Eels album achieved the remarkable feat of making Joy Division sound like Steps, with singer E grimly documenting his sister's suicide and the death of his parents to cancer and a heart attack. But having got through all that pain, this, their third long-player, is the glorious sound of rebirth and renewal – *Mr E's Beautiful Blues* has the chorus: 'Damn right it's a beautiful day' while *I Like Birds* is a song about, erm, liking birds. Complete with REM's Peter Buck on guitar, the unlikely result is one of the most joyous pop albums released in years.

home.c2i.net/bueklev/eels/index.htm – a splendid Norwegian site, although the title page announces 'Eels – A Most Unpleasant Band'.

www.interscope.com/eve/ Musical snippets and some snarling mugshots.

Delta

Laughing Mostly **DISHY** ★★★

Tipped a few years ago as the true successors to Oasis' muddy crown, everything these West Midlanders do seems to unwittingly remind you of the brothers Gallagher – even the album title seems like a nod to *Definitely Maybe*. There might be enough good stuff here to make you forget the comparisons, especially the savage rocker *In The Final End*, but with a new Oasis album round the corner you have to worry about the boys' future.

www.oasisnet.com No Web site about Delta as yet, but learn about the new Oasis stuff here.

Go-Kart Mozart

Instant Wig-Wam And Igloo Mixture

WEST MIDLANDS RECORDS ★★★

The former singer with legendary indie outfits Felt and Denim, at one point the decidedly-odd Lawrence could have achieved mainstream success as a Jarvis Cocker-style geek hero. But his music has become increasingly strange over the years: this latest project features songs

RFTC: not blind really

about Wendy James, the Queen Mum and Birmingham's hideous Bullring shopping centre. Definitely an acquired taste.
www.jeigh.com/felt/index1.html Learn about Lawrence's old bands with this unofficial tribute.

Judge Jules

Clubbers Guide To 2000
MINISTRY OF SOUND ★★★
From the DJ who tried to ban punters waving lightsticks while he was playing, these are tunes for armchair clubbers who don't like to think too hard about their dance music – it's excellent for doing the washing up to. Plus, you get a 'free' calendar full of gurning idiots.
www.ministryofsound.co.uk Official site complete with video, DJ chats and live broadcasts.

Primal Scream

Exterminator
CREATION ★★★★★
Halfway through, Bobby Gillespie cries: 'I'm five years ahead of my time!' He's not joking. Now fast approaching his fortieth birthday, he's still making music that sounds aeons ahead of any other band. This is their darkest record so far, with the psychedelic thrills of indie classic *Loaded* being replaced by the angst of *Swastika Eyes* and the fearsome *Kill All Hippies*.
www.id.net/~escape/astron/primalscream/index.html Awesomely comprehensive unofficial site, featuring press cuttings and sound files.

The Scream: ageing

Rocket from the Crypt

All Systems Go 2
SWAMI ★★★★
Music for the rather heavy of quiff, this compilation of B-sides demonstrates that even rockabillies have a sense of humour. Be warned, though: RFTC seem to have developed a rather worrying obsession with monkeys, what with *Tarzan* and the tastefully-named *Raped By Ape*. Expect the new album to be called *Yet More Unfinished Monkey Business*.
people.goplay.com/rftc/home.html An enjoyable fan site, featuring an extraordinarily difficult trivia quiz about the tatooed ones.

CLASSIC ALBUM

Pixies *Surfer Rosa* 4AD

The singer might've resembled Christopher Biggins, but the Pixies' collision of harmonies and white noise paved the way for everyone from Nirvana to Bush. *Surfer Rosa* is both their most lovely and extreme album – *Gigantic* could be covered by Shania Twain, while *Where Is My Mind* is so deranged, it soundtracks the explosive climax of *Fight Club*. An essential purchase, even if you can't get Brad Pitt's torso out of your mind.
www.mtv.com/news/feature/pixieslive.html See the band live when *Surfer Rosa* was released (with QuickTime).

Various Artists

Muppets From Space Soundtrack
SONY WARNER/EPIC ★★★★
A strange one. The film is a space-age epic, with blue weirdo Gonzo trawling across galaxies to find his lost ancestors, so you'd think the soundtrack would be full of sci-fi classics like *I Lost My Heart To A Starship Trooper*. Instead, it's all disco and funk, including tracks by The Commodores, Jacksons and Joe Tex. It's still dead good, though.
www.muppetsfromspace.com Official site for the film featuring interviews with the stars.

Scott Walker

Pola X
BARCLAY ★★★
Possibly the greatest singer ever to hold a microphone, it's one of life's crueller ironies that the reclusive Walker only writes instrumental albums these days. Soundtrack to the film of the same name, this is still marvellous stuff – if only for the desolate *Extra Blues* sung by Smog's Bill Callahan. Taking in everything from US grunge to Arabic folk, Walker has kept abreast of musical trends – if only he'd bring the lot together with his angelic voice.
home.sprintmail.com/~chadvan/scott/ One of several fan sites – and this one even tells you about Mr Walker's interest in French existentialism. Tres groovy.

'Hi, darling. I'm on the train'

Gig and tour guide

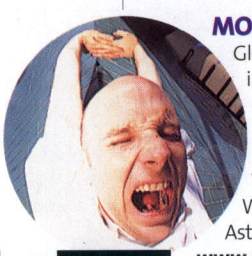
FEB Get out of your cold house and into a cold gig

THE BLUETONES

Good tunes well-played, but about as glamorous as a chip butty.
21 Feb Edinburgh Liquid Rooms, **22 Feb** Cambridge Junction, **23 Feb** Bristol University, **25 Feb** London Shepherds Bush Empire, **26 Feb** Liverpool L2, **27 Feb** Sheffield University
www.superiorquality recordings.co.uk

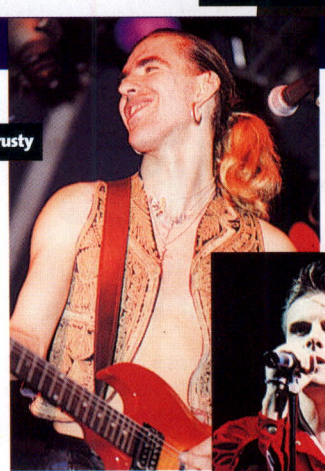
BUSH

Bigger than Oasis in the States, still smaller than Shed Seven here.
18 Feb Norwich UEA, **19 Feb** Manchester Academy, **21 Feb** Southampton Guildhall, **22 Feb** Bristol Colston Hall, **23 Feb** Leeds T&C, **25 Feb** Glasgow Barrowlands, **26 Feb** Newcastle University, **27 Feb** Nottingham Rock City, **29 Feb** Hammersmith Palais, **1 Mar** Hammersmith Palais
www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Pit/7913


Moby: just a big baby

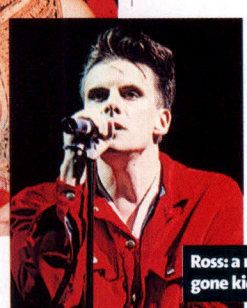
MOBY

Gloriously melodic and intelligent techno from a bald sourpuss.
8 Feb Norwich Waterfront, **9 Feb** Wolverhampton Wulfrun, **10 Feb** London Astoria
www.moby.org


NMA: crusty

NEW MODEL ARMY

Beware the overlords of capitalism – NMA are back!
1 Mar Bristol Anson Rooms, **2 Mar** Wolverhampton Civic Hall, **3 Mar** London Astoria, **4 Mar** Bradford University, **5 Mar** Manchester MDH
www.newmodelarmy.org


Ross: a real gone kid

RICKY ROSS

Ex-Deacon Blue crooner attempts a comeback.
3 Mar London Shepherds Bush Empire
www.rockulike.demon.co.uk

THERAPY?

Irish rock gods try to rectify the damage wreaked by the evil Westlife.
9 Feb Edinburgh Liquid Rooms
www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

PICTURES: RETNA

Al Green Gets Next To You

members/xoom.com/algreen/ ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

This site isn't full of the usual God-botherer fire and brimstone; the man who sang *Let's Stay Together* is preaching about a world 'where sex and funkiness rule'. If you're in any doubt, witness the poll of 64 students, rating his work 'the world's best make-out music'. There's loads on this eccentric site, including a feed from the only station in Columbus, Ohio to play Al's music, and details on the Reverend's prayer line (901 396 9190). And if you still need help getting your end away, *www.algreen.com* is well worth a visit, too.

Songs for swingin' lovers

CROONING Give St Valentine a helping hand with these sites dedicated to the masters of seduction

BarryNet

www.barrynet.com ★★★★

Humphries? McGuigan? No – it's the man who writes the songs that make the whole world sing. The official site of the Barry Manilow International Fan Club features a heap of material, including links to dozens of local fan clubs. It's commercial, very merchandising-orientated – good Lord, there's even a 'Manilow Visa' on offer – but at least the emphasis is on support for charities. 'Wasn't it great in the summer of '78... when mainstream Top 40 radio still embraced Barry's music?' writes the Webmaster. Makes you proud to have been a punk all over again.

Chaka's House

come.to/chaka ★★★★

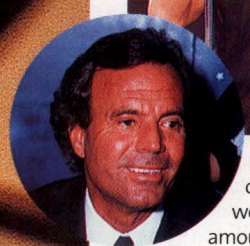
'Let me love you, Chaka Khan,' rapped Grandmaster Flash, and who are we to argue? A Chaka CD merits a spin on any steamy evening, and this good-looking site is a perfect companion to the soul diva herself, featuring news, a biog, discography, photos, lyrics and video clips to download (if you have the time – they're big files). Chaka fans will also want to keep tabs on the gorgeously designed but as yet still-under-construction *www.chakakhan.com* – it looks good enough to merit five stars when it's finished.

RuPaul had been at the buns again

Enrique Iglesias

www.geocities.com/Broadway/3048/ei.html ★★★

Okay, so blokes may hate this Spanish smoothie but the ladies love him, and at least Julio's little lad – *People* magazine's 'sexiest man of 1998' – is more Latino than that bit of US studio fluff, Ricky Martin. This fan site (run by a woman, naturally), caters for his admirers well, with a good amount of sounds and pics plus a small but elegant selection of links – including one to a Julio Jnr site. Is there no end to the buggers?



Isaac Hayes: He's A Bad Mutha

www.isaachayes.com ★★★★

This official site of the man behind the *Theme From Shaft*, *Do Your Thing* and, er, *Chocolate Salty Balls* does him justice, with a cool design to match his own hip image. There's ample content, too: news, biography, film and TV work, plus info on the charities he works with (Mr Hayes is strong on literacy projects). And there are audio samples – to slip into that Valentine's mood, try *Tonight is Right for Love*.

Julio Iglesias' Prom Planning Calculator For Boys

www.chickenhead.com/julio ★★★

Add up the financial cost of a guaranteed shag after Prom Night with this mildly amusing Web site, with 'tips' from Mr Iglesias. For example, the cost of a meal is zero – just get your girl to cook for you. It's

WORDS: TERRY BENTLEY; PICTURES: MOVIESTORE, RETNA

White: greasy

Gaye: deceased

unendorsed by the old rascal himself, of course.

LV: A Visit With Luther Vandross

www.sonymusic.com/artists/LutherVandross/ ★★★

Mr Vandross need have no dispute with his label over this offering: his official Net presence has a clean design that's as easy on the eye as it is to navigate, although the visuals become less interesting as you get beyond the front layer of the site. Everything works well and there are plenty of samples – including, fittingly for a Valentine's date, *Love the One You're With* and *Endless Love*. Enjoy.

Marvin Gaye

www.southland.net/users/gumby/mg.html ★★★

'A tribute to the silkiest, smoothest and most talented singer I have ever had the pleasure of hearing,' it says here, and there aren't too many who'd pick a fight over that – except for his dad, of course. This small site is a reverential but fitting tribute to the prematurely-deceased soul maestro, with many a picture of Marvin 'in action, alone and just relaxing'. There may be other, more substantial, Marvin Gaye resources, but this one hits exactly the right note.

Official Barry White Web site

www.barrywhitemusic.com ★★★

The incomparable walrus of lurve deserves something more memorable than this, but although there are several unofficial fan sites for the old rumbler, none do any better than these worthy but unexciting pages. You'll get Liquid Audio samples here as well as the usual tour details and pics, but if Bazza's low-frequency burbling does it for your girl, better to buy her a CD and some new bass bins before snuggling down in front of the stereo.

Feltz seemed to enjoy Tom's encore

Tom Jones

www.catch.com/snack/tomjones/ ★★★

The elderly yet apparently still attractive Welsh wonder more than earns his place in our romantic round-up. Of the many fan sites dedicated to the Voice from the Valleys, this one (subtitled 'You're delicious') is by far our favourite. The run-of-the-mill content may be unexceptional but, fittingly, it's presented with a bit of swagger and a touch of panache. Which *is* unusual.

THE ART OF NON-SEDUCTION

'It's Metallica or me, Darren!'

For some men, the love of a good woman isn't enough. Such leather-panted individuals make up for not having a girlfriend by thinking they're 'deep' and listening to brain-numbing music all night instead of the sweet sounds of the Reverend Al Green. One bunch guaranteed to send a lady screaming are heavy rockers Metallica – so if you'd rather spend evenings feeling lonely, visit Encyclopedia Metallica at ***www.encycmet.com***, and sing along to *Leper Messiah*. 'Witchery, weakening/Sees the sheep are gathering...' Sheer poetry.

Guitar practice kept Bob Clanton from the corral

best music sites ★★★★★ where can I...

FIND OUT ABOUT MP3s?

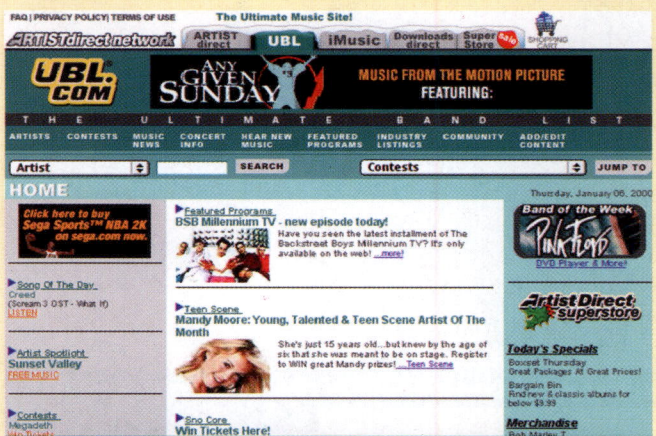
www.mp3.com
Get started on the official site, with heaps of legal downloads and exclusive contact.
mp3.lycos.com
Browse the world of MP3s using a comprehensive search engine.
www.mp3now.com
One of the most popular MP3 portals, now expanding into the UK.
www.cddb.com
Produces a chart of the top online songs by tracking downloads.

FIND A BAND SITE?

www.ubl.com
Make this the first stop on your quest – for its huge search engine.
www.bigmouth.co.uk
UK-specific site with tons of links.
www.musicsearch.com
Find sites for artists or music-related services. Efficient and quick.
www.music999.com
Portal for all good British music, featuring an artist guide.

VIEW THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS?

www.rollingstone.com
The well-written US publication features extra online content from the print version.
www.music365.co.uk
Enjoyable features and news from the 365 Corporation.
www.qonline.com
Increasingly essential online version of the popular magazine.
www.dotmusic.com
British site for all rock and pop news and links.



Track down that Half Man Half Biscuit Web site at the Ultimate Band List – ubl.com

BUY NEW CDS?

www.audiostreet.com
Cheap, easy-to-navigate CD store with a large back catalogue.
www.boxman.co.uk
Competitive, and very easy on the eye.
www.jungle.com
The shopping portal's music section is cheap and very cheerful.
www.yalplay.com
Popular CD and video store. Very easy to use.

BUY TICKETS FOR GIGS?

www.ticketmaster.co.uk
Buy your tickets for any live gig online.
www.aloud.com
Offers a nationwide gig guide.
www.lastminute.com
Excellent bargains on late tickets.
www.ticketzone.co.uk
The biggest events offered online.

WATCH LIVE CONCERTS?

www.liveonthenet.com
Does exactly what the URL suggests.
www.mtv.com
News, and the odd special Web cast.
www.virtuetv.com/music
A nicely designed site, broadcasting from the heart of London.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.fan.barry-manilow
For fans of the golden crooner.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Join the Enrique Iglesias list from ***members.tripod.com/~SoloEnrique***

GET CHATTING?

meetingspot.vibe.com
Soul chat from *Vibe* magazine.

Looking for more Music sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

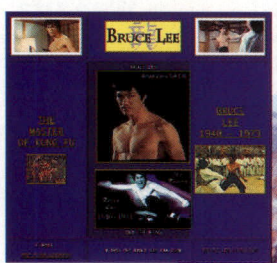
Everybody was kung-fu fighting

MARTIAL ARTS If you grew up wanting to be the Karate Kid, let *the net* give your career a kick-start

Bruce Lee UK Fan Club Page

www.brucelee.org.uk ★★★★

Don't be fooled into thinking people take up martial arts for self-defence purposes or to aid their holistic development; usually they've just spent too many post-kebab late nights slumped in front of *Enter The Dragon*. The Brits behind this site certainly have an obsession for the oriental fighting machine, compiling an exhaustive reference guide to his films and his life – and even the techniques he made famous.



JudoWorld

www.judoworld.com ★★★

Judo started as a less violent form of the frequently fatal ju-jitsu, and has quickly grown into one of the world's most popular martial arts disciplines. Today, it's even used to train Japanese police officers. Judoworld, while distinctly frills-free, will keep you up-to-date with news and results, though beginners might prefer to try ***www.britishjudo.org.uk***.

Japanese Sword Arts

www.bl.physik.tu-muenchen.de/~kz/budo_english/iaido

That's Kenjutsu ('the art of the sword'), Kendo ('the way of the sword'), Iaido and Iaijutsu to you and I. Actually, most of the objects involved are less swords and more big sticks, but you probably wouldn't quibble when faced with them outside an East London pub. JSA will give you a run through of the sword basics, and the action photographs might give you a few pointers...

Lee rendered his opponent helpless with the old 'hold this while I tickle you' trick

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURES: MOVIESTORE, REX

best sport sites ★★★★★

where can I...

FIND THE LATEST NEWS AND SCORES?

espn.go.com
Scores from every sport, plus news.

www.sportlive.net
The *Express*-backed site gives a useful smattering of news and info.

www.soccernet.com
Score flashes from all UK games.

www.sporting-life.com
News, scores and betting advice from the paper of the same name.

FIND TOP FOOTBALL SITES?

www.football365.co.uk
Exciting, fast-improving daily paper with offbeat news and humour.

www.soccerbase.com
All the info a stats fan could want.

www.teamtalk.com
Exclusive news from major clubs.

ukfootballpages.com
Official and fan links for every Premiership, and Nationwide club.

FIND THE BEST SITES FOR POPULAR SPORTS?

www.cricinfo.com
The Internet Movie Database of cricket sites (if that makes sense).

www.scrum.com
The best rugby site on the Web.

www.pga.com
Golf's governing body scores a hole-in-one with this informative site.

www.boxingonline.com
The online king of the ring.

FIND FIXTURES?

www.sportcal.co.uk/public/online.htm
Events and sponsors for five years.

www.pa.press.net/sport/calendar/
Useful guide to the sporting year.

www.sportlive.net
Join for your own email sports diary.

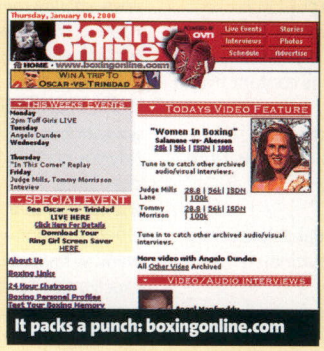
FOLLOW EVENTS LIVE?

www.planetfootball.com
Hub site for English football clubs' audio broadcasts.

www.sportlist.com
Guide to every sport show on British TV.

www.broadcast.com/sports/soccer
A variety of teams in RealAudio.

www.golfboxx.com
Every major tour event in RealAudio.



It packs a punch: boxingonline.com

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

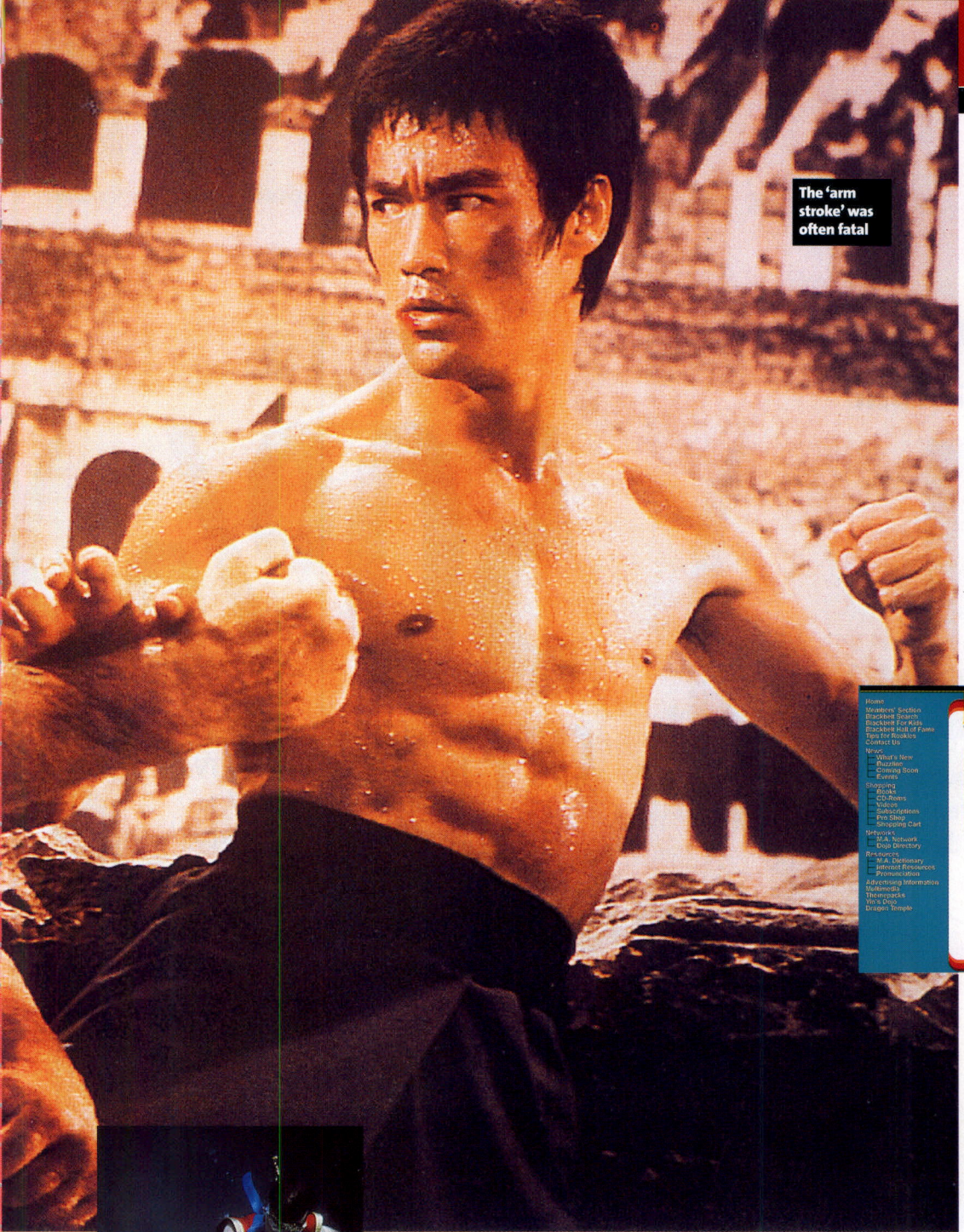
free.uk.martial-arts
Information and advice for all UK martial arts fans.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Send the command 'subscribe martialarts' to ***majordomo@listserv.prodig*** to subscribe to the global martial arts list.

GET CHATTING?

members.xoom.com/Marqueetoo/
Takes you to a specific martial arts chat room.

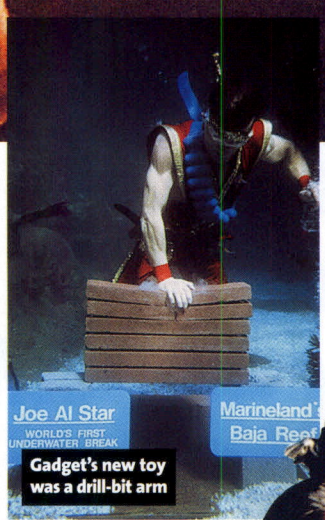

The 'arm stroke' was often fatal

Black Belt Magazine

www.blackbeltmag.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Many martial arts sites are a closed door to those with no prior knowledge of the subject; a mysterious world of secret handshakes and Lau Gar Fist Techniques. Black Belt Magazine is different: it makes the whole thing more accessible with a host of features aimed at newcomers, including a pronunciation guide, a section for kids and the only decent online guide to choosing the right art for you. Best of all are the MPEG clips of particular manoeuvres, which are damn good fun, if nothing else.



Gadget's new toy was a drill-bit arm

Martial Arts Global

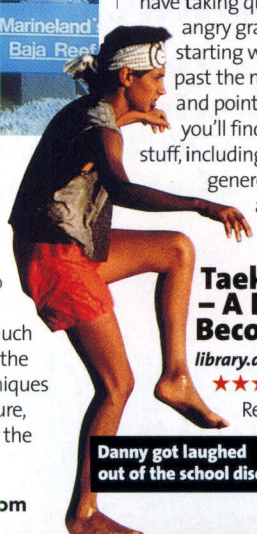
www.martialarts.shoto.com ★★★★

An admirable attempt to pull varying disciplines together, even though much of it is in Dutch. Anyway, the video clips of tricky techniques speak the language of pure, wanton destruction, and the chat room seems well used. Easy on the eye, and not too foreboding for the martial novice.

Martial Arts Network

www.martial-arts-network.com ★★★

Whoever designed this one must have taking quite a pasting from an angry grandmaster before starting work. However, scroll past the myriad of banner ads and pointless pictures and you'll find some pretty useful stuff, including a dictionary, a generous helping of links and some useful beginners' info.


Danny got laughed out of the school disco

Taekwondo – A Dream Becomes Reality

library.advanced.org/16082/ ★★★★

Recent studies have shown that taekwondo can help children with Attention Deficit Disorder – though whether they should practise it or be subjected to it wasn't stated. Still, you can bone up on the techniques required to keep your kids in order here; and, fingers crossed, you might just attain 'human perfection' if you're any good at it.

Tye's Kung Fu

www.kungfu.cc ★★★

As we all know that Kung Fu fighting can be a little bit frightening. Tye's Kung Fu attempts to take the fear out of it with concise advice on techniques, getting started and finding the right supplies. Remember: 'When possible, tie your opponent up with his own limbs. This is an extension of closing, but can involve qinna and multiple limbs as well.' That's alright, then.

Ultimate Fighting Championship

www.seg.com ★★★★

While the likes of karate and judo might boast of being primarily self-defence-based art forms, Ultimate Fighting – a curious hybrid of the schoolyard ruck and a martial art – is simply thrashing your opponent to within an inch of his life. Check out where you can see it – and take part in it – here.

Bondi's fire alarm was a primitive affair

World Kickboxing Association

www.worldkickboxing.com ★★★

Although it's failed to make any real impression in the rest of the sporting world, kickboxing has taken off big time in Britain, becoming one of the most popular martial arts around. You have to wonder what's wrong with proper boxing – fists being easier to aim with than feet – but if it appeals, you can locate a club, learn the basics and buy the kit on this all-encompassing site.

BID & WIN AT QXL

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See www.qxl.com/thenet

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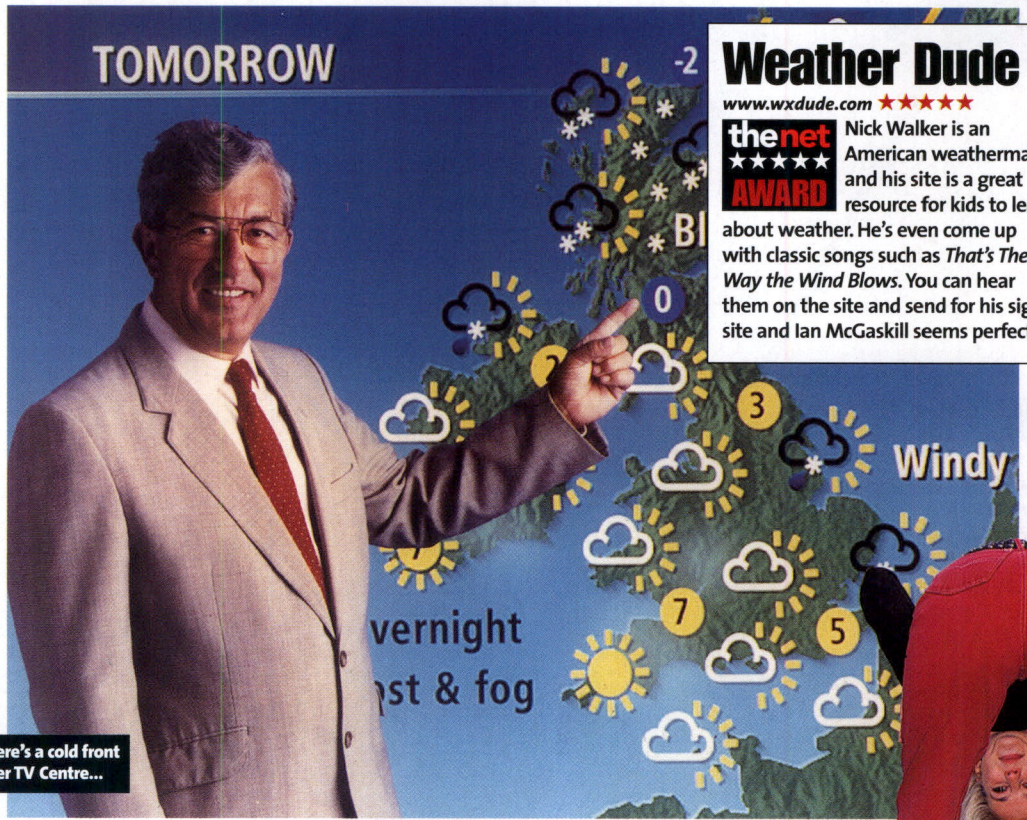


There's a cold front over TV Centre...

Come rain or shine

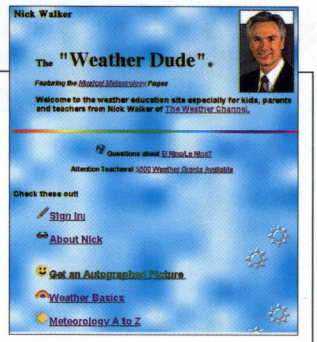
FORECASTERS From big-hearted Bill Giles to Michael 'Hurricane' Fish, the people who bring us the weather are stars in their own right

Weather Dude

www.wxdude.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Nick Walker is an American weatherman and his site is a great resource for kids to learn about weather. He's even come up with classic songs such as *That's The Way the Wind Blows*. You can hear them on the site and send for his signed autograph. A quick look at this site and Ian McGaskill seems perfectly normal and sane in comparison.



...and its a little windy over Scandinavia

Fred Talbot's Home Page

www.weather.u-net.com ★★

A pretty naff site and it doesn't even have a picture of his beloved weather map. Fred is famous for jumping around a floating graphic of the country when doing the forecasts on *This Morning*. But he's more famous for the fact that a streaker invaded his map while on-air. There's a video clip we'd like to see.

The Ian McGaskill Fan Club

193.62.1.220/~gerry/ian/caskill.htm ★★

Everyone's favourite bumbling Scottish weather chap – somehow it never mattered how crap the weather was going to be with his smiling face and effervescent manner – has his very own site. There's little of note here, although you do learn that 'Licks Glam' is an anagram of Ian's surname.

best celebrity sites ★★★★★ where can I...

FIND GOOD GOSSIP?

www.mrshowbiz.com

The fastest track to loads of celebrity gossip, with the occasional exclusive, too.

www.celebrityalace.com

Plenty of gossip, plus links and resources.

READ MAGAZINES?

www.eonline.com

Get in touch with the latest happenings in the worlds of music, TV, film and video.

www.people.com

The popular US *People* magazine. Not exactly upmarket, but good fun.

FIND CELEBRITY HOME PAGES?

www.celebsites.com

Links to official sites of celebs from all walks of fame and fortune.

www.celebhoo.com

Useful new search engine for all relevant information about your favourite celebs.

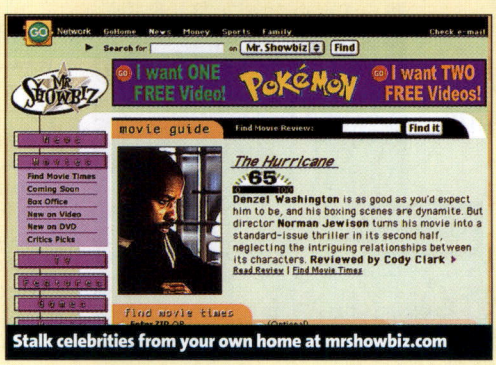
FIND A STAR'S ADDRESS?

www.thezone.pair.com/email

Not just for celebrity emails; their addresses are available, too.

www.celebrityemail.com

Over 14,000 celebs on its pages, from supermodels to princes.



Stalk celebrities from your own home at mrshowbiz.com

BUY CELEBRITY ITEMS?

celebrityconnection.com/index.html

Buy and sell autographs, memorabilia, props and wardrobes.

www.autographworld.com

One of the biggest and most useable online autograph stores there is.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

uk.sci.weather

Discuss the science behind the weather.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Send an email marked 'info' to ***efoley@tiac.net*** to discuss Celebrity Death Pools, and decide who might pop their proverbial clogs next.

MEET MY HERO?

www.yack.com

Updated list of compulsive celebrity events from across the Web.

chat.yahoo.com

Weighty round-up of chat sessions.

GET CHATTING?

www.weatherimages.org

Now you can indulge in every Brit's favourite pastime – talking about the weather – while you're online.

John Kettley is a Weather-man

'We might see a few spots of rain'

www.monocle.org/toffs/johnkettley.htm ★★★

Read the story of how John Kettley was immortalised in song by those one-hit wonders A Tribe of Toffs a dozen years ago. The boy Kettley is still around, but will forever be more famous for that song than for his meteorological ability.

Ulrika Jonsson Feast

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/7375/ulrika.html ★★★

Who gives a monkey's whether it's raining outside when Ulrika's around? No weather info here, just pictures of the Scandinavian beauty who graduated from rubbish morning shows to *Shooting Stars*. Altogether now...Ulrika ka ka ka ka!

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: RETNA

Arnie's bathtime became increasingly complex

Where in the World

www.whereintheworld.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Shamanism in Peru, cruising Route 66 on a Harley-Davidson, discovering the Komodo Dragon in Indonesia, diving down to the wreck of the Titanic, chasing a tornado with the latest storm-chasing technology... out of breath yet? The description of Where in the World's plethora of adventures will bring out the Indiana Jones in everyone. They're all brought to life here and you can check out Dr Bug's Topical Tips, dedicated to those nasty things you can pick up abroad (it doesn't include Italian waiters, sadly).

'Margate again this year, love?'

ACTIVITY HOLIDAYS Why laze on a beach when you can ride a camel in the desert with the Web's help?

Baychef

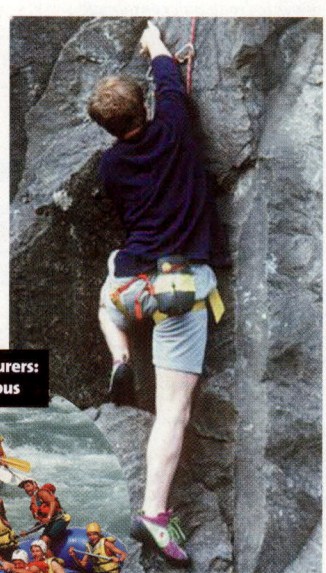
www.baychef.com ★★★

Think all they do in California is surf? Wrong. They serve up good nosh, too. And you can learn how to cook it at the Californian Culinary Academy. As well as general food information, you can read about the courses, which range from Eclectic Fitness Cuisine to the art of Dim Sum. And we thought it came from Sainsbury's.

Campfire Adventures

www.campfire.co.uk ★★★

Forget namby-pamby rafting, the latest action sport is dog sledding (all the rage for corporate team-building). Learn here how to make those huskies fly. Campfire chucks in some conversational Finnish, too, since that's what the mutts speak: 'mena' (go) and 'ses' (stop) should see you OK.



Adventurers: dangerous

Crescent Spur Heli-Skiing

www.crescentspurheliski.com ★★★

This lot offers 50,000 vertical feet of skiing over a five-day holiday, with no charge for extra vertical until after 70,000. We don't doubt this is a great offer if dropping out of a helicopter on a pair of skis is your bag (no ta). Crescent Spur is tucked away between the Cariboos and the Rockies but find out about their holidays here. As a taster, they claim to offer a place where 'quality and quantity run parallel'.

Explore

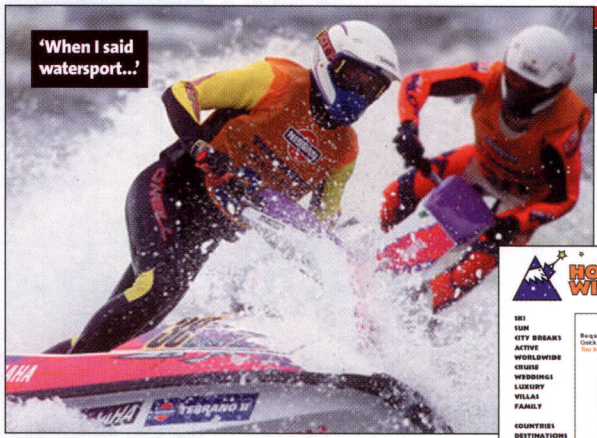
www.explore.co.uk ★★

There's 2000 adventures here – so don't use them all up at once. All the staples are included: from tribal encounters (choose from the Berbers of Morocco or colourful hilltribes of Thailand) to a relaxing schooner trip through the Indonesian archipelago. You get a taste of what to expect, but travellers' tales would have been nice, and it lacks detailed info.

Holiday Bank

www.holidaybank.co.uk ★★★★

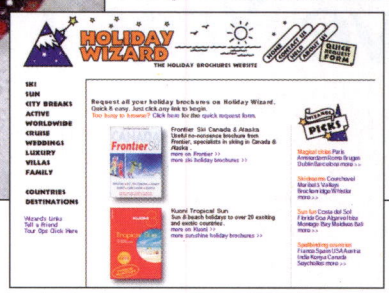
Need a break but not sure what theme it should take? Holiday Bank lets you select a theme and then throws up a myriad of options. We searched for eco tours, and it offered a wide selection: from



ONLINE BROCHURES

Do it by the book

Some ideas on the Net are so blindingly obvious and dead handy that you wonder why they took so long to happen. Holiday Wizard (*www.holidaywizard.co.uk*) lets you order an unlimited amount of holiday brochures at your desktop for over 1000 destinations in over 150 countries. We fancied Malaysia, clicked everything in sight, and within a few days eight enticing glossies had already dropped through our door (direct from the tour operators). Great for globetrotters who are too busy to leave their desks at lunchtime – not to mention people who wouldn't normally get much post.



whale-watching in Newfoundland to wheel-chair-friendly tours in Australia, with plenty of others in between.

Language and Activity Holidays

www.language-and-activity.com

★★★

An English-language holiday in the heart of southern Ireland, to be sure. The Irish know how to enjoy themselves: excursions to landmarks, discos, greyhound racing and sports fixtures are all thrown in as part of a typical programme. You can also take a tennis, horse-riding or golf option, if you wish.

Motorcycle Adventure Tours in Costa Rica

www.biz-online.com/costarica

★★★★

No easy rider here, judging from the photographs, but the rewards are great: waking up to the sound of chattering monkeys, the odd volcanic rumble, daily temperatures of 85 degrees (great for leathers), not to mention spectacular coastal roads. The holidays are put together by Richard Scott, who's been cruising the Costa Rican roads for some 20 years now and who'll sort you out with a nifty Honda XL set of wheels. Good site, Richard: all you need to know is here.

Red Sea & World Wide Holidays

www.regal-diving.co.uk ★★★★

There's ten quid off if you book here, which translates as three beers back home as you discuss your near-miss with a reef shark. An excellent site with a mass of dive information and resort advice.

PGL Activity Holidays

www.pgl.co.uk/holidays/index.html ★★★

There's no more enticing opening line for kids than 'it's a holiday without parents and teachers'. Yippee! PGL staff are masters at keeping your little darlings safe while they indulge in quad-biking and abseiling. No online booking, but you can request free brochures.

best travel sites ★★★★★

where can I...

FIND THE BEST HOLIDAY AND FLIGHT DEALS?

expedia.co.uk
Microsoft's flights and holidays site.
www.lastminute.com
Hugely popular and accessible site, for all the best bargains and deals.
www.a2btravel.co.uk
Britain's biggest online travel agent.
www.ebookers.com
Award-winning travel finder.

GET DESTINATION INFO?

www.Travel-Library.com
Links and resources for any country.
www.roughguides.com
From the publishers of the guides.
www.vtourist.com
Talk to other tourists before you go.
www.lonelyplanet.com
Everything you'd expect from this, the travel guide publishers.

GET DOS AND DON'TS?

www.etravel.org
A neat and tidy online travel mag, with plenty of handy tips.
www.tips4trips.com
1000 handy 'tips for trips', categorised for easy access.
www.totaltravel.net
Travellers' advice and experiences, plus links to airlines and hotels.
www.fco.gov.uk/travel/
Get the official word on countries before setting off.

SPEND A DAY OUT IN BRITAIN?

www.LondonTown.com/index2.html
Everything there is to do and see in the Big Smoke.
www.virgin.net/daysout
A variety of ideas and tips from the people at Virgin.
www.smoothhound.co.uk
A guide to B&Bs and hotels across the whole of the UK.
www.knowhere.co.uk
A brutally honest guide to the backwaters of Britain.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.travel.misc
Discuss everything about travel – from hotels to the weather – with other like-minded jet-setters.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Join the pack at the Internet Travel Network list. Put 'subscribe' in the message to ***listserv@sunnyside.com.***

Natter with some virtual tourists at www.vtourist.com

GET CHATTING?

www.4-lane.com/sportschat/newsc/bp_index.html
If backpacking is your thing, head here to chat to other obsessives.

Looking for more Travel sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: EMPICS, REX

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Are you concerned about making a purchase over the internet? We are a licensee of the Trust security network which guarantees secure encryption of all your details from the moment you log on to our website.

Does it matter to you if the agent you book through is full bonded by ABTA, LATA, ATOL, ASTA and PATA? Needless to say, we are.

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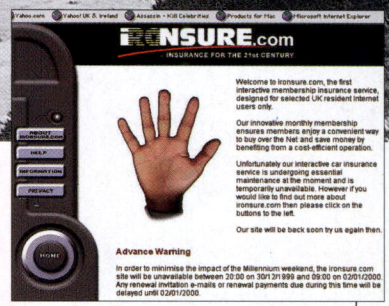
INSURANCE Can you really cover your valuables without wading through hundreds of forms?

Schumacher's wrong turn was fatal

Ironsure

www.ironsure.com ★★★★★



thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Iron Trades, one of the UK's top 20 insurers, is behind Ironsure – a dedicated online car insurance service. All transactions except claims notifications happen online, and the whole process is as slick as an Aston Martin DB7. Check your details or make amendments at any time that suits you, and even the form-filling is less tedious than usual thanks to the use of registration and address databases. All policies are based on a monthly rather than annual renewal and premium basis, so you don't get penalised for spreading payments over 12 instalments.

Direct Line

www.directline.com ★★★★

Those lovable people (well, they were one of the forces in introducing direct insurance and forcing prices down for the consumer, ie you and me) have created an attractive and accessible Web presence, making it easier to obtain insurance info online. With products including life, travel and pets as well as home and motor cover, the site looks good and lets you get quotes and buy online.

Screentrade

www.screentrade.com ★★

Seemingly a good idea in theory, the purpose of this site is to scan the Net and find quotes for you. It takes your details then comes back with figures from a panel of top insurance companies, including Royal & Sun Alliance, Norwich Union, Zurich, Legal & General and GAN. Therefore, in practice, it should come up with some competitive quotes. It should, but it didn't. The prices it came back with were beaten by others we obtained, including (quite oddly) some from the direct-dealing sites of the companies on its panel.

Poseidon tired of Butlins, Clapton

Eagle Star Direct

www.eaglestardirect. co.uk ★★★

The whole boring insurance process – whether it be for home, travel or car – can be handled via the Net at this site, and the (reassuringly) heavy emphasis on security would make Fort Knox weep. The site is among the most attractive to look at, so if insurance does it for you this is the one to hang out at. The quotes we obtained, however, were not the most competitive.

'It's all right, they can claim it back'

Norwich Union

www.norwich-union.co.uk/direct/ ★★★★★

In addition to offering insurance in all conceivable manifestations, Norwich Union Direct has online investments and pensions. What it lacks in visual appeal is more than made up for in ease of use and speedy results – and it's offering a 10 percent discount for buying car insurance online. Motor insurance quotes are returned, it's claimed, in 15 to 45 seconds, and – knock us over with a feather – we found this to be true. Again there's good security, with SSL encryption.

WORDS: TERRY BENTLEY; PICTURES: REX, SYGMA

best money sites ★★★★★ where can I...

LEARN ABOUT INVESTING?

www.mrscohen.com
Bernice Cohen on investing.
www.fool.co.uk
Advice for the learner.
www.armchair millionaire.com
Guide to making a million.

TRADE SHARES?

www.stocktrade.co.uk
Dealers in UK stocks.
www.barclays-stockbrokers.co.uk
Offers real-time dealing and advice.
www.forex-cmc.co.uk
First online foreign-exchange dealer.

GET FINANCIAL ANALYSIS?

www.invweek.co.uk
From *Investment Week*.
www.economist.com
150 years of sagacity online.
www.hemscott.com
Get access to a mine of analysis.

GET MONEY NEWS AND SHARE PRICES?

www.ft.com
The mother of all money sites.
www.bloomberg.co.uk
Up-to-date data for professionals.
www.ukinvest.com
News and real-time quotes.

SORT OUT MY FINANCES?

www.thisismoney.com
Personal adviser for cash problems.
www.iii.co.uk
Advice for individual investors.
www.ftyourmoney.com
Useful, consumer-friendly *Financial Times*-run advice and news site.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

uk.finance
Discussion and advice on a whole variety of topics, including tax.

GET CHATTING?

investor.msn.com
Join in the Microsoft money fun.

Sensible advice from the FT at www.ftyourmoney.com

www.get-your.co.uk

or your .com!

Online Domain Name Registration

includes:

Real-Time Online Setup
Web & Email Forwarding
Optional Holding Webpage
Free Email Autoresponder
Easy web-based administration
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www.get-your.co.uk

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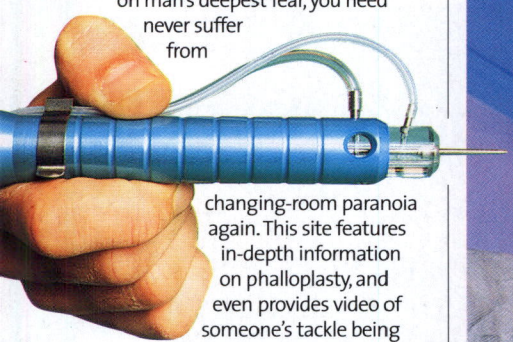
Aesthetic Plastic Surgery International

www.drgiunta.com ★★★

In the chart of great redundant questions, 'would you like a larger penis?' must be in the top 10. Now they've worked out a way to cash in on man's deepest fear, you need never suffer from



changing-room paranoia again. This site features in-depth information on phalloplasty, and even provides video of someone's tackle being anlarged (surgically, not emotionally) before your very eyes.

The Body Electric

www.surgery.com ★★★★★

A multi-award-winning site, recently voted a Healthcare Leading Site by a medical panel. Constantly updated with news and feedback from surgeons (the current Case Of The Week is a 30-year-old fashion designer wanting to be a C-cup), the site also covers some of the more unusual cosmetic procedures such as calf implants.

Body Language International

www.bodylanguage.net

★★★

Online cosmetic surgery journal. The Q&A section dispels various myths, including how much fat you can have hoovered away in one go, and there's a bloke who wants silicon pads inserted in his feet to make him taller. And people say women are obsessed with their appearance...

Look, it's the lighting, ok?

Canadian Laser Aesthetic Surgery Society

www.lasersociety.org ★★★

Laser surgery is big news – local anaesthetic, less scarring – and CLASS promotes the technique tirelessly. There are laser eye-lifts, wrinkle treatments, hair removal and scar reduction. Some of it's pretty technical stuff, but if you want to lose that dodgy tattoo you had done in a drunken moment, this is the place to swot up on the jargon.

Dr. Carmine DelliQuadri

www.cosmeticsurgery21.com ★★★

Want to look 'refreshed, natural and more youthful'? If you do, it's time to check into this Grand Cayman Island clinic for a rhytidectomy (facelift to you and me). In the movies, people called Carmine usually rearrange faces in quite a different way, but Dr. DelliQuadri's site is informative and reasonable

British Association of Plastic Surgeons

www.baps.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

We thought someone was having a laugh when we first saw the Web address, but this is a fantastic site which kicks off with an interactive body map to explain just what you can have done. Some areas of the site are restricted to BAPS members, but articles on techniques and advances, plus reading suggestions are available to visitors. There's also a UK map of centres so you can contact an accredited surgeon – possibly to enquire about having your baps done.

As acronyms go, it's a winner

'Let's give him a pen moustache for a laugh'

WORDS: VICTORIA WILLIAMS; PICTURES: SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY, REX, RETNA

follow the latest audio news

get endless tips and advice

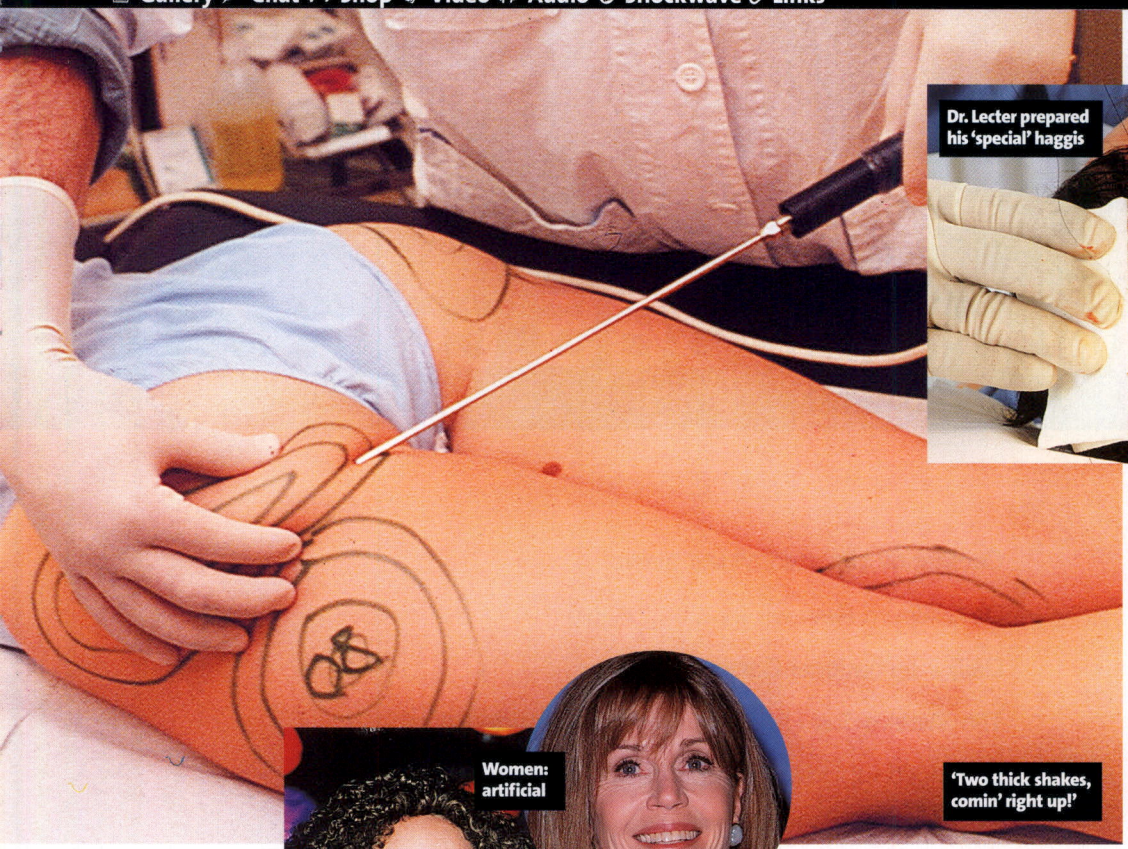
surf for a shortlist

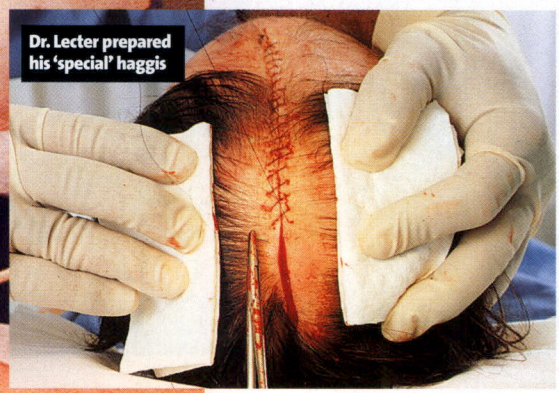
link up to hi-fi on the web

commune with hi-fi folk

check out the latest issue

www.whathifi.com




Dr. Lecter prepared his 'special' haggis

Women: artificial

'Two thick shakes, comin' right up!'

with an excellent FAQ section. What is not discussed is the cost, which indicates that you may have to have a Cayman Island bank account to afford it.

Dr. Edward Jonas Domanskis

www.surgery-plastic.com ★★★★

For $100, Dr. Domanskis offers video consultations over the Internet, so turn your Webcam on your wobbly bits and he will tell you what he can do about them and how much it will cost. The site also contains photos taken during operations (not for the weak of stomach), and the intriguing fact that Domanskis is the official physician of the Lithuanian Olympic team.

E-Body

www.ebody.com/plastic_surgery ★★★★

An excellent (if slightly serious) site, with tons of procedure explanations ranging from boob-jobs to tummy tucks. It might even save you money as the 'before' pictures of successful nose-jobs may convince you your hooter's not so bad after all. We suggest, however, that the adverts for computer imaging techniques are badly placed, given that the pictures on site claim not to have been manipulated.

Imagine You

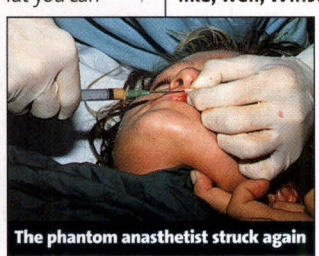
www.imagineyou.com ★★★★

This encourages you to make the best of your body by any means necessary, such as injecting your face with botulism to paralyse crow's feet. You can also win an online makeover – let's hope Bob from Florida is happy with the virtual penis enlargement he won last month.

Lipo Info

www.Lipoinfo.com ★★★

Fat-bottomed girls may make the rockin' world go round, but they also provide a cushy living for cosmetic surgeons. Billed as the liposuction super site, this is where to find out how much fat you can lose without doing any exercise. There's a section on lipo for men with impressive before and after pictures. We especially like the bloke who had his love handles removed – nice G-string, mate.


The phantom anasthetist struck again

ONLINE OPERATIONS

Face to face

On 14 February 2000, Arabella Churchill, a former Deb of the Year and granddaughter of Winnie himself, will have a facelift live over the Internet. Arabella's is the third surgery to be performed on Dr Steven Bloch's site (*www.CelebrityDoctor.com*), and the doc outlines the various procedures he is to perform. The site also contains an email address for Arabella and a gallery of pictures, revealing she was quite a stunner in her Deb days. However, as she approaches her 50th birthday, she has begun to look more and more like, well, Winston, and is understandably keen to stem this process before she sprouts a cigar and starts making involuntary victory signs. Hurry, hurry!

best health sites ★★★★★

where can I...

Get your health supplies online at thinknatural.com

GET AN ONLINE DIAGNOSIS?

www.mayo.edu

Tell your fears to the resident doctor and have them laid to rest.

www.pathfinder.com/drweil

The most celebrated online doctor answers your health worries.

FIND OUT ABOUT PREGNANCY?

www.ukmums.co.uk

Everything you could want to know about bringing up baby.

www.babycenter.com

Masses for mums-to-be.

BUY HEALTH SUPPLIES?

www.auravita.com

New online vitamin store.

www.thinknatural.com

All-encompassing new health portal.

FIND AN OFFICIAL HEALTH SITE?

www.bma.org.uk

Info on becoming a doctor, plus links.

www.doh.gov.uk/nhsexec/direct.htm/

Healthcare help via NHS Direct.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.support.breast-implant

Help is at hand for all the Pamela Anderson-wannabes out there.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Join the Be Health list and learn how to enjoy a fuller, happier life at ***www.maiasworld.com/health/health.com***

GET CHATTING?

www.caloriecounter.co.uk

Support, advice and help for dieters from those who are also off the cakes.

Looking for more Health sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

www.music365.com

Constantly Updated Music News

Daily Album Reviews featuring Audio

Daily International Concert Reviews

The Week's Top UK Single Reviews featuring Audio

Enhanced Interviews With Leading Artists

Streamed Video Features

'On This Day' in Music

Artist Profiles with Special Offers

Latest UK and International Charts

Interactive Daily Readers Opinion Poll

Readers Reviews and Commentary

Searchable Database of Reviews and News

The Famous Lookalikes

Live Online Chat Events

New Band Spotlight

Readers' Forum Message Board

Personalised Daily Email Alert Service

Competitions - Win VIP Tickets, CDs and Books

Secure 24-Hour Music Store

Specials on CDs, Video, DVD

Buy Gig Tickets and Merchandise

Album Of The Week Specials

Record Search

Pre-Release Music Discounts

READ IT, SEE IT, HEAR IT

'Take my wife. No, please...'

COMICS The greatest British funnymen are on the Web – but do they raise as much as a chuckle?

'He's ready, men. We'll drop him tonight!'

Another Monty Python Website

user.mc.net/~manos424/python/

★★★

These pages steer clear of the obvious pitfall of any comic act's fan site: trying to be funny. Instead, there are a smattering of links and

Brave Sir Mandelson admired his Dome

The George Formby Society

www.georgeformby.co.uk/ ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

The exemplary Web site of the George Formby Society is an exhaustive trawl through the northern comedian's 40-year career plus all the latest news from the society's fun-packed meetings. There's also the opportunity to buy CDs, and a whole load of other Formby-related shenanigans. Highlights include the catalogue of an auction of all George's possessions after his death – which included soiled underwear – plus a 300-song discography. The only complaint is the lack of audio clips: how much would you give to hear a snippet of the classic 1933 tune *With My Little Ukulele In My Hand* (withdrawn)?

best funny sites ★★★★★

where can I...

FIND COMEDY LISTINGS?

www.timeout.com/london/hitlist/comedy.html

Comprehensive run-down of what's tickling funny bones.

www.whatsonstage.com

Anything to do with performance arts under the one roof.

The strange world of bugman.co.uk

FIND SOMETHING FUNNY ON THE TELLY?

www.cartoon-network.co.uk

From *Scooby Doo* to *Johnny Bravo*, all your favourites are here.

www.paramountcomedy.co.uk

Home of the 'Panic Button', a joke dispenser for your desktop.

FIND SOMETHING STRANGELY AMUSING?

www.bugman.co.uk

Collection of weird funny bits, including a selection of 'evil' laughs.

www.darwinawards.com

The most pointless deaths ever, updated every year. Hours of fun.

HIRE A FUNNYMAN?

www.entertainers.net

From stand-ups to belly dancers.

members.aol.com/lromain/lro.htm

All sort of entertainers for hire.

LEARN TO BE FUNNY?

www.netgates.co.uk/customers/instantwit

Attempts to teach improvisation and delivery.

www.clowns.freeserve.co.uk

Circus skills and other general tomfoolery.

FIND SOME ONLINE JOKES?

www.jokedepot.com

Searchable archive of gags to share with your mates.

www.jokepost.com

And did you hear the one about.... Share your favourites online here.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.humor

Swap jokes and tips with other would-be comedians.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Visit ***www.montypython.net*** to meet fellow Python devotees.

GET CHATTING?

laugh.at/vicandbob/

Vic and Bob fans are able to wax lyrical here.

Believe it or not, this man's a god in Albania

Hancock on the Web

www.hancockon-theweb.org.uk

★★★

A low-key but comprehensive overview of Hancock's career, with plenty of pictures of the great man himself plus a messageboard, quiz, biographies of his co-stars and film, CD and video reviews. Or at least there will be, once it's all finished. But even incomplete, this is still a fine place to discover all about East Cheam's most famous resident.

background material, a comprehensive selection of song lyrics and, best of all, an exhaustive news archive about what the surviving Pythons are up to. For example: 'February 4-6, 1999 – John Cleese spends three days lecturing at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.'

The Morecambe and Wise Home Page

www.morecambeandwise.co.uk

★★★★

Britain's greatest ever double act get the Web site they deserve, complete with detailed notes on their long careers, chat room, gallery, messageboard and a very comprehensive set of links on where to buy their various videos, tapes and books. Marred only by the unpleasant pink background behind all the pages.

Norman 'Pitkin' Wisdom

www.albania.co.uk/culture/pitkin.html ★★

A fickle British public might have forsaken little Norman and his hilarious knockabout antics but he remains a star in Albania, where his films were released under the name of 'Pitkin'. This page commemorates a trip Norman made to the 'land of the eagles' in 1995, where the locals – starved of entertainment under Communist rule – mobbed the diminutive funster on his arrival. The visit culminated with dinner at the villa belonging to the country's former dictator, Enver Hoxha. Remarkable.

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION, MOVIESTORE COLLECTION

The incontinent seagull ruined the *Clothes Show*'s big finish

Absolutely fab

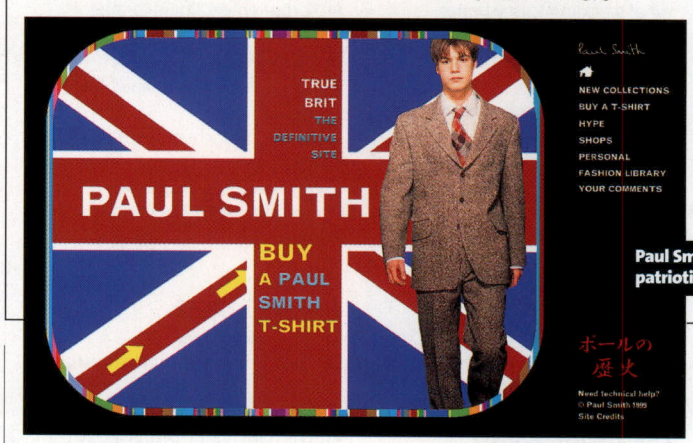
FASHION As London Fashion Week rolls around once again, we look at the Web sites dedicated to the celebration of posh frocks and cufflinks

Paul Smith

www.paulsmith.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Caution: you may need sunglasses to view this Web site. British and proud of it, the man who is adored by the Japanese (but don't let that put you off) and one of this country's most successful designers ever brings his collections to the small screen. There's no denying that Paul likes to keep busy: here there's the original menswear collection, plus a few spin-offs (the sharper London line, the cheaper 'PS' label, the casual line) as well as the women's and childrenswear collections. And what can you buy on this beautifully designed and easy-to-navigate site? A T-shirt... and that's it. Oh well – ogle the classic tailoring online then battle the hordes of Japanese punters at the shop.



Paul Smith: patriotic

Armani Exchange

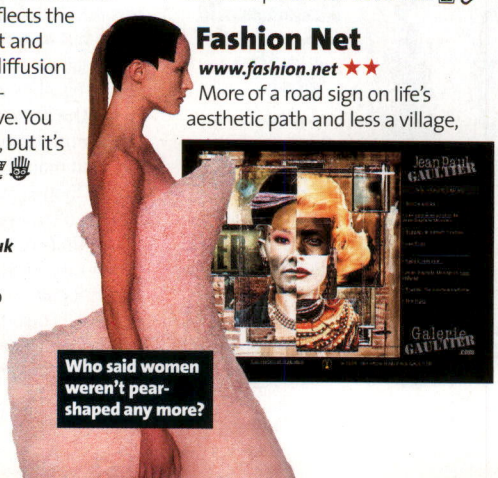
www.armaniexchange.com ★★★★

A personalised greeting from Giorgio himself welcomes visitors; he sincerely hopes that 'customers who come to my stores feel the same comfort they would entering a friend's house'. Having witnessed the bouncers (sorry, 'shop assistants'), we aren't convinced. But the neat site reflects the clothes – minimalist and sleek – and, as the diffusion line, they aren't jaw-droppingly expensive. You can't buy online yet, but it's being revamped.

Fashionfile

www.fashionfile.co.uk ★★★★

Mainly dedicated to British fashion, this compact site has a neat summary of collections, succinctly reviewing the major directions seen at shows. It also contains listings for make-up artists, models, photographers – in effect, the Yellow Pages for creating your own fashion mag. We give Brownie points for in-depth reports on the homely Brit scene, such as the Bus awards and the prestigious Jerwood prize. Well observed.



Who said women weren't pear-shaped any more?

Fashion Net

www.fashion.net ★★

More of a road sign on life's aesthetic path and less a village, this portal has links to important things in life – well, things Voguettes consider important. The exhaustive list of all things fashion includes links to shops, top fashion colleges (if you strive to become the next Lagerfeld), or the great man's site itself if that's too much like hard work. Unfortunately for a fashion portal, it could look better – it's more Mr Byrite than Bironi.

Jean Paul Gaultier

www.jpgaultier.fr ★★★★

Monsieur Gaultier's site is as eclectic as you'd expect from the man who put Madonna in a conical bra. There's news on his latest projects, photos and info on scent, as well as notes on all collections – and, since he started in 1976, that's quite a few pages worth. Perhaps the best part of the site is the virtual store: Galerie Gaultier is laid out exactly like the shop, so you can browse for his 'n' her gear to your heart's content without a 'helpful' assistant hassling you. Virtual shopping at its most chic.

The Look On-Line

www.lookonline.com ★

Can you imagine: *paying* to visit a site? That's sooo last year.

WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURES: PA NEWS

best style sites ★★★★★

where can I...

BUY CLOTHES ONLINE?

www.fashionmall.com
Mammoth US site offering discount goods to suit all tastes.
www.tops.co.uk
Get all the goodies from Top Shop and Top Man stores without venturing onto the High Street.
www.next.co.uk
As above, but with a slightly less confusing design.
www.boo.com
The online clothing superstore opens at last...

FIND THE LATEST FASHION NEWS?

www.fashion-icon.com
From street style to room design, this site keeps you up to date with the latest trends.
www.fashion-planet.com
Hard-hitting features and plenty of hidden extras from the fashion world.
www.fbia.com
The Fashion and Beauty Internet Association puts us on the right track with this hub of fashion info.
www.widemedia.com/fashionuk/
Useful fashion portal with plenty of highbrow news.

SEE THE LATEST FASHION SHOWS?

www.firstview.com/home.html
Thousands of pics from the latest collections from the catwalk, plus news and links to fashion mags.
www.fashion.net/shows/
View videos of all the latest fashion shows as they roll off the catwalk.
www.worldmedia.fr/fashion/
Live TV fashion coverage, plus links to designers and their collections.

CHECK OUT THE LATEST CATWALK TALENT?

www.supermodel.com
Informative site, packed with supermodel stats, facts and interviews.
www.modelnews.com
Including Model of the Month and an interesting feature on how much the big babes in fashion earn.
www.webtalent.com
Online modelling directory of wannabes. Join up, it's free. Or just have a laugh at the other entries.
www.ftv.fr
Sit back and watch highlights from the catwalk.

READ FASHION DOs AND DON'TS?

www.manslife.com/clothes
If you think men's fashion is an oxymoron, visit soon. Topics covered include 'unsightly zipper droop.'
www.beautynet.com
Having a bad hair day? Drop by this no-frills site for advice on such problems.

Catch up on the latest catwalk happenings in glorious RealVideo at www.ftv.fr

www.nystyle.com
Get the latest tips on staying ahead from the world's fashion capital.
www.beautyworks.com
Hundreds of links and tips for improving your visage.

GET AN ONLINE MAKEOVER?

www.virtualmakeover.com
Purchase the software that'll let you change your looks at a click.
www.compucloz.com
Try it for free online. Hours of fun.
www.makemeover.com
Change your style using a photo.
www.vidalsassoon.com
The hair and make-up expert dispenses invaluable makeover tips.

JOIN A NEWSGROUP?

alt.fashion
Keep up-to-date with the latest fashion happenings here.

FIND A MAILING LIST?

Subscribe from ***www.direct-world.net*** for the inside line on the fashion industry and the latest shows.

GET CHATTING?

www.beautybuzz.com
Can't decide on your make-up first thing in the morning? Then discuss it here as soon as you rise and shine.

Looking for more Fashion sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

LEGWARMERS AND CO

Dressed for success

For those crap at clothing co-ordination, help is at hand – in the cheery form of Leah Feldon (*www.leahfeldon.com*). The 'style guru' is out to help women 'discover their own personal style' – although given that this month's special fashion purchase is legwarmers, the mind boggles as to what personal style she might actually uncover. Included is a biography (among other jobs, Leah was a special correspondent for *People* magazine – details of her speciality aren't divulged), and a shop where avid readers can buy her books. She may have hit the jackpot with her latest tome: *Does This Make Me Look Fat?!*

Stella limbers up

Philip Treacy

www.philiptreacy.co.uk
★★★★
An impressive site for Britain's premier milliner. Treacy, winner of many accessory awards, displays both his couture (v.expensive) and ready-to-wear (not so expensive) collections on this lively site; details of past collections, awards and info on where to get a Treacy titfer (you can't buy online) are all clearly laid out. Some hats aren't meant for years of regular wear, but who cares?

Unfortunately, that's exactly what this one requires. It does, however, offer a taster of what's inside – and that's an almost pathological examination of fashion's happenings. But despite the attention to detail, even the most devoted fashionistas might think twice about forking out around £80 a year just to browse.

Style Masters International

www.stylemasters.com ★
Warning bells should ring when reading the blurb for this site. Apparently, it 'details emerging trends from European cities, the US and St Tropez...' St Tropez? The place that conjures up visions of fat Lotharios and women dressed in gold lamé bikinis? If, however, you're an oil magnate and wish to outfit your bit of arm candy, stop here. Likewise, if you fancy paying $300 for photos of the latest collections as opposed to seeing them in *Vogue*, this site's for you.

Models: lonely

Visionaire

www.visionaireworld.com ★★★
A minimalist site publicising the trendy quarterly magazine/book. Each is designed, written and photographed by key members of Planet Fashion (Gan, Lagerfeld, Testino, etc), and inspires gob-smacked adoration in some readers: 'This is a great objet d'art, so buy this now!' enthuses Gert-Jan from the Netherlands. Currently on issue number 28, they're highly collectable – Visionaire no. 18, originally $75, was recently auctioned for $7,000.

Vogue

www.condenast.co.uk ★★★★
The style Bible's online presence is similar to the printed version, with articles such as 'Trends 2000' (suede and felted wool in simple shapes, actually). But, bless its little cashmere socks, it inhabits another world. In its end-of-year editorial, the doyenne of fashion magazines intoned: 'We... have decided to take a little time out to concentrate on other concerns – like finding the perfect pony-print wrapping paper.' Expect a major new content revamp soon, beginning during London Fashion Week.

The instructors

TRANSPORT Whether you own a balloon, a plane or a boring old car, learn to drive the thing online

Aerogirl

www.aerogirl.com ★★★

Brainchild of 'Emily', who comes from 'a fairly long line of pilots', Aerogirl is designed specifically for ladies who like to fly. It's pretty scant at the moment but looks promising, inviting women to submit tales of their first solo flight and providing inspiration with stories of lady pilots through the ages. Unfortunately, tips like 'Dirty hands during pre-flight? Then use disposable latex surgical gloves' don't exactly promote the girl power image.

Bristol University Hot Air Balloon Society

www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Union/BUHABS/ ★★★★

We bet you didn't know that Bristol is regarded as the European, if not the world, capital of hot-air ballooning. Better listen to Bristol University Ballooning Society, then. They evidently know what they're on about but it appears that they don't want anyone else to have a go – tales of ballooning history, featuring many a plummet to the ground, abound, and you can read about the 'retrieve' (a van which rushes around picking up the crew from where they land). Now, d'you still want to get in the basket?

The Cybercockpit

www.grouper.com/francois/ ★★

Put off flying by not knowing your altitude indicator from your artificial horizon? Visit this little resource put up by one François Bergeon, a certified flight instructor and Civil Air Patrol captain in Arizona, where you can 'fly the Cybercockpit'. Actually, you can't really fly it – it's not a simulator – but you can learn your way around the dials and knobs by clicking a lot. A good grounding? Hmm... better make that take-off point (sorry).

In a panic, Smith reached for the hand brake...

Driver Zone

www.driverzone.mcmail.com ★★★

Driverzone looks promising from the outset, and it is – if you're a learner driver. The whole site is straightforward and soothing for the beginner, although anyone who needs the explanation of a flashing indicator ('this vehicle is turning left!') probably shouldn't be on the road anyway. The interactive theory tests make compulsive reading, both for learners and experienced drivers alike. Reckon you'll still pass? Don't you be so cocky – things have moved on since that man with the flag.

Flight Training Information System

www.gg-pilot.com ★★★★

A veritable feast for those whose idea of heaven is a spin inside a metal beetle, this site covers all aspects of learning to fly. The helicopter forum had proved a hot-bed for debate (James Cowham wants to know what, as a pilot, 'you would be likely to earn'); the many articles discuss relevant topics (turbulence, turbine engines, the airspace system); and there's advice on medicals and careers. It's a handy little number even though it's American – which thankfully means that there are no pictures of Noel Edmonds.

Fergie's first lesson barely got off the ground

Learn2 Drive a Stick Shift

www.learn2.com/06/0689/0689.php3 ★★★

Before you jump confidently into your learning vehicle and kangaroo hop all the way to the test centre, take a quick look at this: a learn2.com '2torial' on how to get your gearbox well under control. By step five you'll be downshifting with the best of them, and at the end of step seven you'll (hopefully)

Soon to be starring in a panto near you

Driving Online

www.driving.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

If your talents behind the wheel are less Michael Schumacher and more Maureen from *Driving School*, this should be your first port of call. Learn from a the heap of stuff here, which isn't just for beginners: there are some excellent driving tips, advice on how to deal with road rage (including your own), instruction on how to ride a motorbike, drive a lorry and make a career out of driving (Maureen did), 'funny stories', and a mountain of crash statistics to sober you back up again. And if that's not enough, there are more than a few links to take you just where you want to be – until you are able to do it all by yourself.

have mastered the dreaded 'hill challenge' (we remember it well). It's very American, but the tone is simple and informative, rather than patronising – and you'll be well prepared to head for 'understand tire care' and 'improve your gas mileage' 2torials by the end of it all.

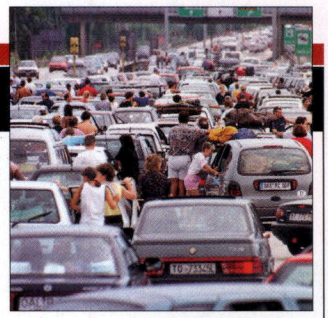
Learner Drivers UK

www.learners.co.uk ★★★★

Apparently this is 'THE site for UK learner drivers!' It's certainly worth a look if you're about to get behind the wheel for the first time as there's a directory of schools by region – just select your postcode. Contained within its walls is pretty much everything you need, including a guide to how many lessons you might need, and a mock theory test. It even gently guides you through the post-test experience – although putting a photograph of a Ferrari on the 'beyond the driving test' page might be a touch misleading. Full marks for offering such inspiration, though.

FOREIGN DRIVING

'I said stop!'



So you think that British drivers are the worst in the world? There's plenty on the Internet to prove you wrong. Take, for example, Turkey, where according to Tom Brosnahan (*www.infoexchange.com/tkdriving.html*) trucks carry the legend 'Allah Korusun', which reassuringly means 'May God Protect Me'. In India, meanwhile, the driver's mantra (according to James at *www.indiatime.com*) is 'to slow is to falter, to brake is to fail, to stop is defeat'. Finally, avoid Italy, where apparently 'road laws exist only as tests of character and self-esteem' (*www.amherst.edu/~djbloch/driving.htm*). Then, climb in your car and be truly thankful that you live in the UK – and never moan about bus drivers again. Well, maybe that's a bit strong.

The Sailing Info Centre

www.boating.co.nz/sailing/ ★★★

If you want to learn something you should always ask an expert. And there's no denying that, when it comes to sailing, that's exactly what the New Zealanders are. So learn how to make your little boat more zippy here. It's instructive, but it probably helps to know a wee bit about sailing before you jump in, otherwise helpful hints such as 'sail the shifts' and 'when it's windy sail higher in the lulls and lower in the puffs' will pass right over your head – just as they did ours.

'I think it's fair to say you've failed'

best learning sites ★★★★★

where can I...

LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

www.travlang.com
70 languages, all learnable online.
www.learnplus.com
Spanish and German tuition.
www.ild.com
It costs to learn here, but the audio samples are a useful extra.
www.ipl.org/youth/hello
Learn 30 languages free.

LEARN A USEFUL SKILL?

www.how2.com
How to do almost anything – in a remarkably simple way.
educationunlimited.co.uk
Impressive on IT in general.
www.premier-pages.co.uk/investor
Become a financial whizz.
www.tmc.ndo.co.uk
Tricks and tips for the magician.

FIND LEARNING RESOURCES?

www.schoolsnet.com
Portal with lesson details.
www.topmarks.co.uk
Help with work, on 100s of topics.
www.searchgate.co.uk
Directory of learning links.
www.bjpinchbeck.com
The famous homework helper.

LEARN OVERSEAS?

www.eeop.com
Adult learning in Europe and US.
www.ribi.org/yex/
School exchange programmes.
www.dfee.gov.uk
Helpful Government advice.
www.britishcouncil.org
Can help place you overseas.

LEARN WITHOUT SCHOOL?

www-icdl.open.ac.uk
Good ol' OU online.
learning.channel4.com
Help and advice for home learners age 4-19.
www.tele-school.org
Learn online and interact, too.
www.nec.ac.uk
Help for distance learners.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.autos.driving
US-centric driving discussion.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Send a message marked 'subscribe PC_AUTO_SIMULATORS' to ***listserv@listserv.aol.com*** to discuss driving games.

GET CHATTING?

www.madd.org/chat/
Driving advice from Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURES: KOBAL, MOVIESTORE, REX

FourFourTwo

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

EMILE HESKEY
'Leicester are a top-six side'

'THE BALLS WERE WARM'
Football's conspiracies

MENTAL!
Inside the Argentine hooligan gangs

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Rivaldo

A day in the life of the world's greatest player

MARCH 2000 £2.90

Rory Delap Nolberto Solano Coleman, Symons & H

On sale Wed 2 Feb

'Shut up and watch!'

KEEP 'EM QUIET Looking for sites to keep the kids schtum? Try this lot...

Arnie took his loss at Jenga badly

Cartoon Network

www.cartoonnetwork. co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Now these guys understand small people. No Shakes-perean meanderings; just simple offers to play. And so you do, with a host of Network characters (Dexter, Johnny Bravo, The Powerpuff Girls) flying, punching and jumping their way Net. You'll soon shove your five-year-old from his/her seat and take to the controls yourself, ignoring their bleating pleas as you restart for 'one more go'. We know we did.

best kids sites ★★★★★

where can I...

Adults are also allowed at www.citv.co.uk

FIND KIDS' TV SITES?

www.citv.co.uk
The fun begins here with all your childrens' TV favourites, from Dog and Duck to the Wombles.
www.bbc.co.uk/education/home
Will guide you towards all BBC kids' TV raves, plus Schools Online.

BUY TOYS ONLINE?

www.toysrus.co.uk
Offers easy shopping access to all the big brand-name toys.
www.funstore.co.uk
A real house of fun for those in search of toys.

FIND IDEAS FOR DAYS OUT?

www.bbc.co.uk/ukok/
The BBC does it again with this guide to fun for the holidays.
www.virgin.net/daysout/
Masses of ideas for those great British days out; you can search by area or activity.

FIND BEDTIME STORIES?

www.home-office-mall.com/bedtime-story/
Stories you can print out.
www.bedtimebooks.com
These claim to teach children 'an important message'. Yuck.

FIND WEB SITES FOR TEENAGERS?

www.teen-scene.com
Everything for the wired teenager.
www.teen-net.com
Innovative teen portal, with music, sport and forums.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

uk.rec.scouting
Wave your woggle here.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Find your child a penpal by mailing ***listproc@mainstream.net*** with 'subscribe penpals' in the body of the message.

GET CHATTING?

members.tripod.com/teen_BEAT/friends_chatroom
Chat with other teens on all the essential topics.

Looking for more Money sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

Action Man

www.actionman.com ★★★

The greatest comeback since the combat jacket has a home on the Web that's inspired if not inspiring. Where else could you disguise a product recall by blaming it on Doctor X (see the warning that the Evil Doctor has sabotaged Bungee Jump's grappling hook and harness)? Still, Heligun Flight Sim is worth the short time it takes to load. Sleep well, chil'un.

The Frank Spencer model never took off

All the fun of the YMCA

Disney.com

disney.go.com ★★★★

Head for the Zeether games zone, where lies a plethora of free Shockwave games to expand your compact humanoids' minds. Our vote goes to Flick's Food Fight (easy for the first minute, then...wooahh), although Hunt Zabor is worth a tinkle for the sound effects alone. And if you'd like to watch your child lose all confidence, load the 'harder than chess' Penguin Bounce.

Pokemon Village

www.pokemonvillage.com ★★★

OK, so they're a cynical marketing ploy, but the small people love 'em. Sadly, the official site is limited to 'buy here, kiddies' ads for all the latest guff, but Pokemon Village at least gives your blighters something to play with, such as clips and screensavers. Not that we'd promote this sort of activity.

AYPWIP?

The Brain drain

Catchphrases. Bloody awful things. Yet every Saturday morning on ITV, we indulged The Brain (the manic mouse of *Pinky & The Brain* fame) when he would ask of his dope-fed partner, 'Are you pondering what I'm pondering, Pinky?'. Nanoseconds later would follow some of the most surreal statements ever made on childrens' TV, courtesy of Pinky's replies:

- Yes, but if our knees bent the other way, how would we ride a bicycle?
- **I think so Brain, but how will we get three pink flamingoes into one pair of Capri pants?**
- Sure, Brain, but how are we going to find chaps our size?

Thanks to Pinky & The Brain Lab Notes: *snowball.frogspace.net/labnotes/*

WORDS: MARK PAYTON; PICTURES: REX

Don't point that thing at me!

SHOOT-EM-UPS Think you pack a mean pistol? Test out your shooting skills with the help of the Web

Fivebellies kept his Y2K bunker well stocked

Doom Nation

www.doomnation.com

★★★★

Great games don't die, they just move onto the Internet – and Doom is a great game. Deathmatch Doom is generally through one-on-one modem link-up, so call up a friend and see how multiplayer *used* to be. All the technical data you need is here, and you can download a shareware version – some of which date back to Ye Olden Tymes (well, 1993).

Fragdaddy

www.fragdaddy.com ★★★★★

Keeping up with the biggest and best 3D shooting games is not easy, which is why we look to Fragdaddy for advice. It covers all the classics, and has plenty of news about maps and mods – programmes that subtly change the games – for all the major shoot-em-ups. The interviews are worth reading – if only to find out why some people have nothing better to do than develop computer games.

NetGames

www.netgames.org ★★★★

You've got the latest games; you've practised to the point of obsession; your modem is super fast; and your mouse hand is aching in anticipation. But, unfortunately, nobody wants to join in your killing spree. Head towards NetGames and everything will be sorted. Simply register and you get access to the names of other people up for a bit of virtual hell-raising of a weekday eve.

Quake 2000

www.quake2000.net/ ★★★

Quake III Arena is the latest stress-busting, RSI-inducing, instantly addictive kill-fest in the Quake series. Gone is the single-player quest-based game, replaced with an increasingly demanding series of battles against bots. Quake 2000 aims to be the first port of call for Quakers, with news, insightful interviews and a dedicated 3D gaming search engine.

Planet Unreal

planetunreal.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

For years Quake ruled supreme as the undisputed king of the shoot-em-up. Sure, there were pretenders to the throne, but they were soon sent packing... until the launch of Unreal, the game that fired a well-placed rocket to dislodge Quake's crown. Unreal Tournament has now firmly established the series' reputation, especially since it corrected problems with the online gameplay (see page 150). Part of the GameSpy Network, this excellent site keeps you abreast of updates, Unreal news, downloads and tells you where the best online deathmatches are to be had.

'Hurry up – I haven't got all day, you know'

Raven Software Presents

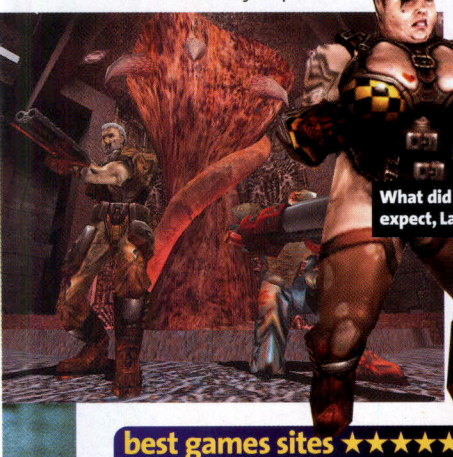
www2.ravensoft.com/source ★★★

A software developer has no use for games that are past their sell-by date. Sometimes they give away the code for people to do with as they wish, as long as it's for non-profit motives. This site has the source code for both the Hexen and Heretic series of games – basically Doom with wizards – allowing truly dedicated (i.e. lonely) people to develop their own games.

SiN

www.sinpost.com ★★★★

Set in 2037, SiN has all the elements of a cyberpunk classic: private police forces, mind-altering chemicals and a mad scientist plotting to reek havoc on futuristic Freeport's youth. An active, if sometimes puerile, forum is where SiN enthusiasts meet and greet before arranging times to blast each other senseless. And if you've got a SiN-related Web site, SiN Post will host it for you, gratis.



What did you expect, Lara Croft?

Spifferaneous' Wolfenstein 3-D Empire

www.angelfire.com/sc/thewolf3dempire ★★★★

If it wasn't for this shooting trip around Nazi Germany we wouldn't now be playing Quake III Arena or Unreal Tournament. It doesn't look impressive now, but Wolfenstein caused an adrenaline rush in teenage boys that school sports day couldn't hope to replicate. For novices there's a Wolfenstein encyclopedia; for the adventurous there are add-on levels; and for the obsessed there's customisable source code.

Frank's BioSuit meant he could game all day long

INTERACTION

'Meet people! No!'

Playing computer games online is one step above single-player action on the social competence scale, but it's all still pretty faceless and not an ideal form of social interaction. But even online gamers like to get out every now and again, and, if you're any good at the games, you can go along too. Although most of the major events – like QuakeCon – take place in the US, the UK does have its own gatherings: some large scale such as Wireplay's Quakeadelica, others much smaller, with just a few like-minded gamers gathered together in somebody's house. If you're too shy, too lazy or just plain crap, then you can always check out the photographs on the Web: *www.planetquake.com/photos*

Valveworld

www.valveworld.com ★★★★☆

If you're eager to test your gaming prowess against humans but are too chicken to venture online, Half-Life is a good place to start. Credited with having the most realistic and unpredictable computer opponents of any shoot-em-up, you can hone your skills on these realistic bots. If you're an experienced 'Lifer then Valveworld keeps you abreast of the latest mods, such as the promising Alien Invasion.

Voodoo3 Net

www.Voodoo3.Net ★★★★

Playing the fiercest new games means keeping up with 3D graphics cards. There's no point playing Quake III or Unreal Tournament if it's jerkier than Tik and Tok on speed. There are several types of cards, but Voodoo3 is one of the best supported. Visit this site regularly and don't get left behind – your mates will only laugh.

best games sites ★★★★★

where can I...

BUY COMPUTER GAMES?

www.game-retail.co.uk
Up to 10 percent off marked games ordered online here.

www.gamesparadise.com
All the top games discounted.

www.gamesstreet.infront.co.uk
All the latest titles for all the formats.

www.softwarezone.co.uk
As well as all the latest formats you can buy games for your old Atari Jaguar or even the ill-fated Sega Mega CD 32X.

FIND GAMING NEWS?

www.gamesdomain.co.uk
Great news and game-related features on the ones that matter.

www.ign.com
Thorough worldwide games news.

www.gamedaily.com
Loads of the latest news, on a very busy site.

www.bluesnews.com
Some great in-depth articles and features.

FIND DEMOS?

www.happypuppy.com
The newest demos and shareware games, complete with a download database.

www.gameaddict.net
Demos and reviews for all the latest PC games.

www.3dfiles.com
Demos and shareware downloads of the latest and best games.

www.acdownload.com
Not the best looking site, but plenty of great downloads.

FIND HINTS AND CHEATS?

www.gamefaqs.com
An encyclopedia of advice and secrets for your favourite games.

www.xcheater.com
The latest cheats for the newest games make their way here.

www.cheatstation.com
Cheats and ever-so-helpful hints for all manner of games, from PC to PlayStation.

totalgames.net
Hints and tips plus news, reviews and opinion.

PLAY GAMES ONLINE?

www.shockwave.com
Shocked games and cartoons – if you can't get animated here, there's no hope for you.

www.gameplay.co.uk
Britain's biggest and best online gaming.

Buy, get help, cheat, read about and play games at www.gameplay.com

www.gameszone.com
Free service covering gamers all over Europe.

www.theclq.com/main.asp
Forget Manchester United, this is the Real champions League... For *Quake*, that is.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.games.computer.doom.playing
Discuss the latest game happenings with other *Doom* merchants.

JOIN A MAILING LIST

Stay up-to-date by mailing ***major domo@sportsurf.net*** with 'info elsewhere-gamers-noise' in the message.

GET CHATTING?

www.dreamcast.com/community.shtml
Meet other Dreamcasters here.

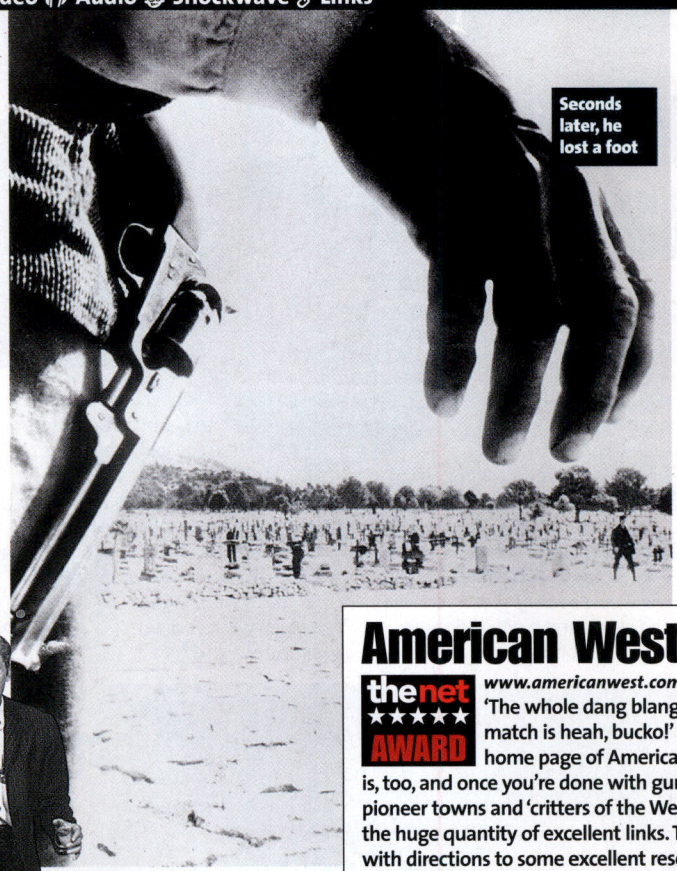
Looking for more Games sites? Turn to Need To Know on page 118

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

▸▸ www.autosport.com
for.racetrack.enthusiasts
AUTOSPORT
B&H
For the motor racing news updated throughout the day, live radio reports and personal e-mail, visit the new Autosport website.

Go for your guns!

THE WILD WEST Don't rely on John Wayne films – let the Web show you the real West


Seconds later, he lost a foot

'The others will be here soon'

American Western E-zine

www.readthewest.com ★★★

Created for those with a penchant for plaid shirts, Jack Daniels and Garth Brooks, this e-zine is packed full of poems and articles themed around 'ranch and rural life'. You can also send an 'e-howdy' card. 'I sent a card to my dad, and when I previewed it I cried!' gushes Aires Robeson from Canada. Mmm.

Starsky and Hutch's early years

Images of the American West

www.treasurenet.com/images/americanwest/westnv.shtml ★★★★★

As Kojak once mumbled, 'a picture speaks a thousand words', and such thinking is amply demonstrated here with this collection of photos from the American National Archives. It's a superb opportunity to see life as it really was when photography had just been invented. Some are funny, many are horrific (witness 'Black Jack Ketchum getting fitted with a new necktie'), but all are fascinating.

Native American Life

www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/8962/ ★★★

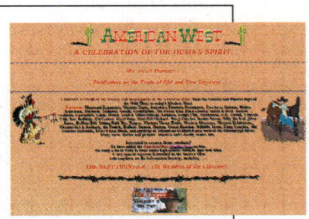
It's easy to forget that European settlers weren't the first to live in the West. Thankfully, people like Kelly Green, part Cherokee (Indian, not Jeep, that is) have set up sites such as this to remind us. It's all a bit text-heavy but information on the various tribes' history, language and culture makes good reading.

American West

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.americanwest.com ★★★★★

'The whole dang blang shootin' match is heah, bucko!' screams the home page of American West. It is, too, and once you're done with gunslingers, pioneer towns and 'critters of the West', follow the huge quantity of excellent links. The serious stuff isn't left out either, with directions to some excellent resources on the European immigrants who opened up the New World all those years ago. But we like the Annie Oakley page best: what the gutsy, gun-happy dame was doing to terrified quails back in 1872 just doesn't bear thinking about.



Wild West

www.calweb.com/~rbbusman/index.html ★★★★

If you thought Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were merely the products of a screenwriter's imagination, you'd be wrong. Photos of the real Butch and Sundance are posted here, along with mugshots of Billy the Kid and numerous other outlaws, lawmen and wild, wild women. Discover the little-known Commodore Perry Owens, a thoroughly deadly sheriff, and an early exponent of girl power, Pearl Hart – the only woman ever to have robbed a stagecoach.

Grandma Walton never missed

best history sites ★★★

where can I...

RESEARCH BRITISH HISTORY?

www.thehistorychannel.co.uk

Impressively comprehensive resource guide and forum for British history.

www.great-britain.co.uk/history/history.htm

Like a huge textbook online; concise but fun.

VISIT AN ONLINE MUSEUM?

www.nhm.ac.uk

Home of the Natural History Museum, with masses of online content.

www.museums.co.uk

Web directory of regional and national museums.

INVESTIGATE MY FAMILY HISTORY?

www.familysearch.com

The best international directory of births, marriages and deaths.

www.pro.gov.uk

Advice and resources from the Public Records Office.

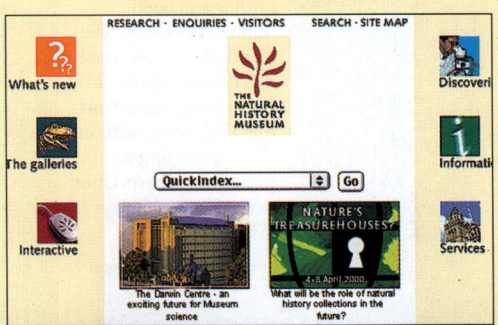
FIND OUT ABOUT WWII?

britaininworldwar2.future.easyspace.com

Well-written, informative nuggets on the 1939-45 conflict.

www.geocities.com/Pentagon/4143

Watch our boys bash the Hun all over again in the Battle of Britain.



Check out the Natural History Museum without using the tube

BUY A BIT OF HISTORY?

www.collectiques.co.uk

Huge directory of online antiques from Corgi Classics to Ming vases.

www.AntiquesRoadshow.co.uk

Not affiliated with the TV series, but useful all the same.

RESEARCH THE MONARCHY?

www.royal.gov.uk

The official site, where Her Maj will answer your queries. That's very nice of one.

www.dcs.hull.ac.uk/public/genealogy/royal

The Royal Family's genealogy investigated. Discover if you're related by blood or marriage.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.old-west

Converse with other Wild West aficianados.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Find out more about World War Two by sending an email with 'subscribe WWII-L' in the subject to ***listserv@listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu***

GET CHATTING?

chat.genealogy.org

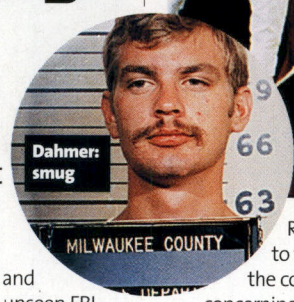
Research your family in a chat room.

WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURES: KOBAL, MOVIESTORE, MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

'Such a friendly young man'

SERIAL KILLERS Is there a psychopath living next door to you? Here's where to find out

'Can we have lunch yet? I'm starving'



Dahmer: smug

APB Serial Killer Bureau

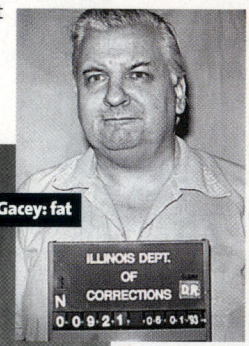
www.apbnews.com/crimesolvers/serialkiller/index.html ★★★★

In which public-spirited punters are given the chance to bag themselves a serial killer by using an interactive map of unsolved crimes. A bit like *Murder, She Wrote* – except that Angela Lansbury's not around and the chief suspect is a psychopath with '666' on his forehead rather than a retired colonel in pipe and slippers. Also includes unseen FBI files on notorious madmen.

Casebook: Jack The Ripper

www.casebook.org ★★★★★

The oldest and most celebrated serial killer of them all, Jack The Ripper continues to fascinate thanks to the conspiracy theories concerning his identity. Each suspect is profiled and rated, and there's a plethora of Ripper goodies: letters, reports and chat rooms. Turns out it was Professor Plum in the kitchen with a billiard cue after all...



Gacey: fat

Internet Crime Archives

www.mayhem.net/Crime/serial.html ★★★★

More twisted fun from ***mayhem.net***, which catalogues the strange, the weird and the downright dangerous. Here they've compiled a league of serial killers, judged by their number of (reported or suggested) victims. Will anyone top the 300-plus tally of Pedro Alonso Lopez, the 'Monster of the Andes'? Why are the Brits so rubbish at serial killing? Find out here...

Psychos R Us

www.psychosrus.freeservers.com ★★★

A healthy portion of blood with a side order of extra gore, Sir? Mmm, yes please. Check out the vital stats of notorious serial killers or just revel in the collection of killers' nicknames, including 'The Trash Bag Murderer' and 'The Giggling Granny'. Fun, fun, fun.

Manson: hairy

Serial Killers Talk To Sondra London

www.sondralondon.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

As jobs go, there are more pleasurable ways to make a living than corresponding with psychotic serial killers. Not that you'll hear Sondra London complaining; since starting her own site dedicated to incarcerated murderers she's become a Web celebrity, a media personality, published author and been banned from AOL. She even dates a 'reformed' serial killer. London lets her subjects submit art and interviews, without either indulging or patronising them. Often sickening, but always fascinating.

Serial Killer Info Site

www.serialkillers.net ★★★★

'No sensationalism, no gore,' it says here, so look elsewhere. Serial Killer

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURES: REX

best weird sites ★★★★★

where can I...

FIND WEIRD NEWS?

www.joeha.com/whiteboard/
A collection of those silly little stories to email your mates.
www.tabloid.net
National Enquirer-style paper, which mixes truth and fiction.
members.aol.com/JACO70/wackynewz1.index.html
Everything and anything strange, from celebrities to little green men.
www.anorak.co.uk
Cataloguing the weirdest stuff from the British tabloids.

FIND THE REAL X-FILES?

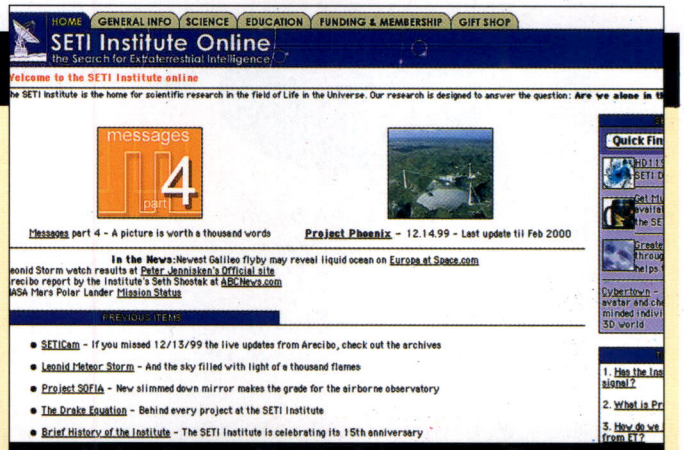
www.seti-inst.edu
The world's top ET-hunters try to track down those elusive little green men.
www.conspire.com
UFO files, plus a bunch of conspiracy theories and loads of assorted other madness.
foia.fbi.gov/unusual.htm
Over 1,600 pages of previously secret material from the FBI.
www.foia.ucia.gov
More grainy and indistinct documents from the US Government's dusty vaults.

LEARN ABOUT CULTS?

cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/home.html
The maddest cults in the world, lovingly detailed for your perusal.
www.mayhem.net/crime/cults.html
Find out what happens when dangerous cults go over the edge.
www.factnet.org
Regular newsletter dedicated to tracking scary sects worldwide.
www.religioustolerance.org/destruct.htm
Get the lowdown on potentially dangerous cults before you join.

SEE WACKY WEBCAMS?

www.irelandseye.com/ghost/map.html
Try and spot a ghost in Ireland.
www.lochness.co.uk/livecam/
Watch Nessie in all her glory, without travelling all the way to Scotland.
www.jpl.nasa.gov/flower/
Watch the 'corpse flower' – which smells like burning flesh – bloom.
www.flyvision.org/sitelite/Houston/GhostWatcher
Webcams from some people who believe they might actually have ghosts.



Are we alone? Use the power of the Web to find out at www.seti-inst.edu

FIND OUT ABOUT AREA 51?

www.ufomind.com/area51/
A hefty resource on the secret base.
www.nauticom.net/users/ata/area51.html
Excellent site. Includes travel tips. Those guards can shoot to kill.
www.parascope.com/articles/1196/area1.htm
Find a photograph of the infamous black mailbox here.

FIND A CONSPIRACY THEORY?

www.disinfo.com
Conspiracies for the whole family.
www.4conspiracytheories.com
A wealth of conspiratorial links.
www.conspire.com
Sceptical tales with tongue placed firmly in cheek.
www.larouchepub.com
Very, very worrying indeed.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.true.crime
For gore fans everywhere.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Join the fact-based serial killer list from ***janedoemain.com/sk-list/***

GET CHATTING?

www.scibernet.com/xfiles
Regular chats for those who know the truth is out there.

The giant Nilsen snowball headed right for the cops

Unabomber Trial

www.unabombertrial.com
★★★★
A shining example of online crime reporting. The Unabomber – Theodore Kaczynski – killed three and injured many more in a 15-year bombing spree across the USA. He only stopped when newspapers agreed to print his 35,000-word 'manifesto'. The whole story is covered here.

Zodiackiller.com

www.zodiackiller.com ★★★★★
In the late sixties at least five people were murdered in California by the self-styled 'Zodiac Killer', who taunted police with clues. He has never been caught, and the case continues to baffle experts – and, judging by this site, legions of Net users. The case is detailed here in fascinating depth, but also check out ***members.aol.com/Jakewark/***.

Serial Murder: Through The Looking Glass

serial-killers.virtualave.net/ ★★★★
Info is a serious study with in-depth articles. Don't miss the FAQ which answers the burning question: 'Am I morbid for looking at this?'

Serial Killers – A Growing Menace

killersdomain.virtualave.net ★★★
So disgusted is Rahul Mukherjee with the 'hideous creatures' that are serial killers, he's dedicated a Web site to them. Around 20 of the best-known – including Manson and Dahmer – are profiled, making it a useful introduction if lacking in explanation.

Is there a serial killer lurking deep inside you? Find out by taking the brief 'Are You A Serial Killer?' test. OK, it's not brief and it's not called that, but it will uncover your psychopathic tendencies with such questions as: 'When young, were there any particular fairy tales which frightened you?'

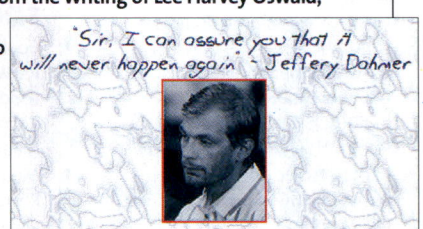
KILLER IDEAS

Write like a loony

"You know what you are doing, you are just trying to railroad me." – Lee Harvey Oswald

"The price SF will pay is a bus full of kiddies..." – The Zodiac

Searching for a unique personal gift for someone special? Then look no further. Give them their very own font, based on the handwriting of a convicted crazy man. Killer Fonts (*www.killerfonts.com*) sell just that, with entire font sets constructed from the writing of Lee Harvey Oswald, Charles Manson, the Zodiac Killer and other nutters, not to mention upstanding fellows like Lincoln, Washington and Beethoven. Why not send a parcel addressed in Jeffery Dahmer's handwriting, then watch as police blow it up? Price: $19.95 for three fonts.



PICTURES: IMAGEBANK, MOVIESTORE COLLECTION

Live a fuller life –

There's no aspect of modern life left untouched by the advent of the Web. The trouble is, to

BANKING

Abbey National
www.abbeynational.co.uk
Alliance & Leicester
www.alliance-leicester.co.uk
Barclays ***www.barclays.co.uk***
Capital Bank plc
www.capitalbank.co.uk
Citibank ***www.citibank.com/uk/***
Co-operative Bank
www.co-operativebank.co.uk
Direct Line ***www.directline.com***
Egg ***www.egg.co.uk***
First Direct ***www.firstdirect.co.uk***
First-e ***www.first-e.com***
Halifax ***www.halifax.co.uk***
Hamilton Direct ***www.hdb.co.uk***
HSBC ***www.banking.hsbc.co.uk***
LloydsTSB ***www.lloydstsb.co.uk***
Nationwide ***www.nationwide.co.uk***
NatWest ***www.natwest.co.uk***

CLASSIFIEDS

Economist Classifieds Market Place
www.classified.economist.com
Eureka-net ***www.eureka-net.co.uk***
Free Classified
www.freeclassified.co.uk
JJ Electronic Plaza Classifieds
www.jjplaza.com/onlinead
Localads ***www.localads.net***
London's Classifieds
www.classifieds-free.net
LOOT ***www.loot.com***
netTRADER ***www.nettrader.co.uk***
PhotoAds ***www.photoads.co.uk***
Photographic Ads
www.nitehawk.com/iga/ads.html
UK Personals
www.uk-personals.net

DOWNLOADS

Apple ***asu.info.apple.com***
DaveCentral
www.davecentral.com
Download Net ***www.download.net***
Download Warehouse
www.downloadwarehouse.com
Freeware ***www.freewarehome.com***
ICQ ***www.icq.com***
Memoware (PDAs)
www.memoware.com
Microsoft
www.microsoft.com/downloads/
MP3 ***www.mp3.com***
Real Player ***www.real.com***
Shareware ***www.download.com***
ZDNet ***www.hotfiles.com***

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Encarta
encarta.msn.com
Encyclopedia Britannica
www.britannica.com
Encyclopedia.com
www.encyclopedia.com
Funkandwagnalls
www.funkandwagnalls.com
Hutchinson Encyclopedia
www.bt-ern.co.uk/helicon

FOOD AND DRINK

Cooking Index
www.cookingindex.com
Food Channel ***www.foodchannel.com***
KitchenLink ***www.kitchenlink.com***
Meals.com ***www.meals.com***
Meals For You ***www.mealsforyou.com***
Restaurants.co.uk
www.restaurants.co.uk
Room Service ***www.roomservice.co.uk***
Wine Spectator
www.winespectator.com

GAMES

GUIDES AND COMPANIES

Dreamcast ***www.dreamcast.com***
Future Games Network
www.fgnetwork.com
GameCenter ***www.gamecenter.com***
Game Daily ***www.gamedaily.com***
Gameplay ***www.gameplay.com***
GameSpot ***www.gamespot.com***
GameSpyder
www.gamespyder.com
GameStats ***www.gamestats.com***
GA Source ***www.ga-source.com***
MacGaming
www.maccentral.com/games
MultiPlayer ***www.multiplayer.com***
Nintendo ***www.nintendo.com***
Playstation
www.playstation.com
Sega ***www.sega-europe.com***
Total Video Games
www.totalvideogames.com
Yahoo! ***games.yahoo.com***
Zone ***www.zone.com***

GENEALOGY

British Ancestral Research
www.brit-a-r.demon.co.uk
British Heraldic Institute
www.kwtelecom.com/heraldry
Family Search
www.familysearch.com
Genealogy Research Source
www.genealogy.bookpub.net
Public Record Office
www.pro.gov.uk
Rootsweb ***www.rootsweb.com***

GOVERNMENT

BRITAIN

10 Downing Street
www.number-10.gov.uk
Arts Council ***www.artscouncil.org.uk***
Department for Culture, Media and Sport ***www.culture.gov.uk***
Department of Health
www.doh.gov.uk
Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions
www.detr.gov.uk
Ministry of Defence ***www.mod.uk***
Scottish Parliament
www.scotland.gov.uk
Welsh Assembly ***www.wales.gov.uk***

THE WORLD

Australia ***www.fed.gov.au***
China ***www.gov.cn***
European Commission ***europa.eu.int***
France ***www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr***
Germany ***www.bundesregierung.de***
Russia ***www.gov.ru***
United Nations ***www.un.org***
United States
www.whitehouse.gov

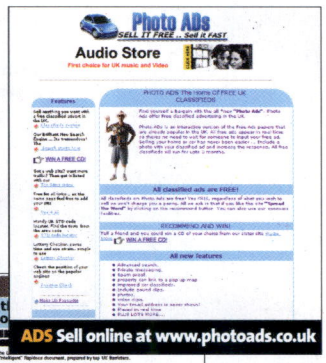
HEALTH

DIETING

Fitness Online
www.fitnessonline.com
Light Living ***www.lightliving.com***
Three Fat Chicks ***www.3fatchicks.com***
WeightWatchers
uk.weightwatchers.com

DOCTORS & DIAGNOSIS

Ask Dr Weil
cgi.pathfinder.com/drweil/



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exploit the Net's potential to the full, you'll need a monthly updated guide to the best sites...

Ask The Doc ***www.ask-the-doc.com***
British Medical Journal
www.bmj.com
Healthy Ideas
www.healthyideas.com
Intelihealth ***www.intelihealth.com***
Mayo Clinic ***www.mayo.edu***
MedRef ***www.medscout.com***
Mental Health
www.mentalhealth.com
Patient ***www.patient.co.uk***

SUPPORT & INFORMATION

Alcoholics Anonymous
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
Alzheimer's Disease Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk
Cancer Bacup
www.cancerbacup.org.uk
Centre For Online Addiction
netaddiction.com
Diabetes UK ***www.diabetic.org.uk***
Don't Smoke
www.dontsmoke.com
HIV/AIDS Information & Links
www.brad.ac.uk/staff/ijhodgson/hivlinks.htm
National Autistic Society
www.oneworld.org/autism_uk
National Meningitis Trust
www.meningitis-trust.org.uk

HOMES

ESTATE AGENTS

Bushells ***www.bushells.com***
Chancellors ***www.chancellors.co.uk***
CityLet ***www.citylet.com***
Cluttons Daniel Smith
www.cluttons.com
Egerton ***www.egertonproperty.co.uk***
Friend & Falcke
www.friendandfalcke.co.uk
Goldschmidt Howland
www.goldschmidt-howland.co.uk
Hamptons ***www.hamptons.co.uk***
John D Wood ***www.johndwood.co.uk***
Knight Frank ***www.knightfrank.co.uk***
Strutt & Parker
www.struttandparker.co.uk
Winkworth ***www.winkworth.co.uk***
Your Move ***www.your-move.co.uk/your_move.html***

PROPERTY FINDERS

Accommodation Directory
www.accommodation.com
Byehome ***www.byehome.com***
HomeDirectory
www.homedirectory.com
Homefile UK
www.homefileuk.co.uk
Homepages ***www.homepages.co.uk***
Home to Home
www.home-to-home.co.uk
Home Sale ***www.home-sale.co.uk***
HouseNet ***www.housenet.co.uk***
Internet Property Finder
www.propertyfinder.co.uk
Lets Direct ***www.letsdirect.co.uk***
Property Sight
www.property-sight.co.uk
UK Property Gold ***www.ukpg.co.uk***

HUMOUR

Cyber Comedian
webtamers.com/comedian.html
Funny ***www.funny.co.uk***
JokeDepot ***www.jokedepot.com***
JokePost ***www.jokepost.com***
The Onion ***www.theonion.com***
The Simpsons
www.foxworld.com/simpsons
South Park ***www.comedycentral.com***
Uproar ***www.uproar.com***

JOBS

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Brook Street
www.brookstreet.co.uk
Independent Appointments
www.indappts.co.uk
Manpower ***www.manpower.co.uk***
The Media Network
www.tmn.co.uk
Reed ***www.reed.co.uk***

JOB SEARCHES

Ask4 ***www.ask4.co.uk***
Expat Network
www.expatnetwork.co.uk
Golden Square
www.goldensquare.co.uk
Gradunet ***www.gradunet.co.uk***
Guardian ***www.jobsunlimited.co.uk***
Jobsearch UK ***www.jobsearch.co.uk***
Jobsite ***www.jobsite.co.uk***
MonsterBoard ***www.monster.co.uk***
Overseas Jobs
www.overseasjobs.com
Personnelnet
www.personnelnet.com
Stepstone ***www.stepstone.co.uk***
WorkWeb ***www.workweb.co.uk***
Yelcom ***www.yelcom.com***

KIDS

0-8

Bedtime stories
www.home-office-mall.com/bedtime-story
Disney Channel
www.disneychannel.co.uk
FunSchool ***www.funschool.com***
Kidscom ***www.kidscom.com/orakc/Mousers/mouse.html***
Nickelodeon ***www.nickjr.com***
Sesame Street
www.sesamestreet.com/preschool

8 PLUS

AJ Kids ***www.ajkids.com***
BBC Schools Online
www.bbc.co.uk/education/schools
Club-Z ***www.club-z.com***
EduWeb ***www.eduweb.co.uk***
Family Education
www.familyeducation.com
BJ Pinchbeck Homework Helper
www.bjpinchbeck.com
Tarzan ***disney.go.com/worldsofdisney/tarzan***
Teen Advice ***www.teenadvice.net***
Thunk ***www.thunk.com***
Yahooligans ***www.yahooligans.com***

LAW

Desktop Lawyer ***www.desktoplawyer.freeserve.net***
Divorce Online
www.divorce-online.co.uk
Law Rights ***www.lawright.co.uk***
Legaldocs ***www.legaldocs.com***
UK Law Online
www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn

MAGAZINES

ONLINE MAGS

Dredly ***www.dredly.com***
Foocha ***www.foocha.com***
The Onion ***www.theonion.com***

Salon ***www.salon.com***
Seven ***www.sevenmag.com***
Slate ***www.slate.com***
Suck ***www.suck.com***
Teeth ***www.teethmag.com***
Word ***www.word.com***

MOTORING
CAR MANUFACTURERS
Audi ***www.audi.co.uk***
BMW ***www.bmw.co.uk***
Citroen ***www.citroen.co.uk***
Ferrari ***www.ferrari.it***
Fiat ***www.fiat.co.uk***
Ford ***www.ford.co.uk***
Honda ***www.honda.co.uk***
Jaguar ***www.jaguarcars.com***
Lotus ***www.lotuscars.co.uk***
Mazda ***www.mazda.co.uk***
Mercedes-Benz ***www.mercedes-benz.co.uk***
Mitsubishi ***www.mitsubishi-cars.co.uk***
Nissan ***www.nissan-europe.com***
Peugeot ***www.peugeot.co.uk***
Porsche ***www.porsche.co.uk***
Rover ***www.rover.co.uk***
Toyota ***www.toyota.co.uk***
Vauxhall ***www.vauxhall.co.uk***
Volkswagen ***www.volkswagen.co.uk***
Volvo ***www.volvocars.volvo.co.uk***

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES
Imperial War Museum ***www.iwm.org.uk***
London Transport Museum ***www.ltmuseum.co.uk***
National Gallery ***www.nationalgallery.org.uk***
Natural History Museum ***www.nhm.ac.uk***
Tate Gallery ***www.tate.org.uk***

MUSIC
TOP ARTISTS
The Beatles ***members.tripod.com/~taz4158/pepper.html***
Blur ***www.blur.co.uk***
David Bowie ***www.davidbowie.com***
Boyzone ***www.boyzone.co.uk***
Catatonia ***www.catatonia.com***
Garbage ***www.garbage.com***
Macy Gray ***www.macygray.com***
Jamiroquai ***www.jamiroquai.co.uk***
Manic Street Preachers ***www.manics.co.uk***
Oasis ***www.oasisinet.com***
Prince ***www.love4oneanother.com***
Radiohead ***www.radiohead.co.uk***
REM ***www.remhq.com***
Stereophonics ***www.stereophonics.co.uk***
Supergrass ***www.supergrass.com***
Travis ***www.travisonline.com***
Robbie Williams ***www.robbiewilliams.co.uk***

NEWS
NEWSPAPERS
Daily Record ***www.record-mail.co.uk***
Financial Times ***www.ft.com***
Guardian ***www.guardian.co.uk***
Independent ***www.independent.co.uk***
The Mirror ***www.mirror.co.uk***
Daily Star ***www.megastar.co.uk***
The Sun ***www.bun.com***
Sunday People ***www.people.co.uk***
The Telegraph ***www.telegraph.co.uk***
The Times ***www.the-times.co.uk***

NEWS SERVICES
CNN ***www.cnn.com***
ITN ***www.itn.co.uk***
NewsNow ***www.newsnow.co.uk***
News Unlimited ***www.newsunlimited.co.uk***
PA News ***www.pa.press.net***
Reuters ***www.reuters.com/news***

PEOPLE FINDERS
EMAIL ADDRESSES
Bigfoot ***bigfoot.com***
EmailFinder ***www.emailfinder.com***
People Site ***www.peoplesite.com***
WhoWhere ***www.whowhere.com***
Yahoo ***people.yahoo.com***

PHONE NUMBERS
BT Directory Enquiries ***www.bt.co.uk/phonenetuk/***
Thomson Directories ***www.infospace.com/uk.thomw/***
Yellow Pages ***www.yell.co.uk***

RADIO
STATION DIRECTORIES
Broadcast ***www.broadcast.com/radio***
On The Air ***www.ontheair.com***
Radio Directory ***www.radiodirectory.com***
Radio Now ***www.radionow.co.uk***
Radio On The Internet ***www.radio-on-the-internet.com***
RealGuide ***realguide.real.com***

SCIENCE
IQ TESTS
Brain.com ***www.brain.com/***
IQ Test.com ***www.iqtest.com***
Mensa Workout ***www.mensa.org/workout.html***

NEWS AND UPDATES
BBC Science ***news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/default.htm***
Eureka Alert ***www.eurekalert.org***
NASA ***science.nasa.gov***
New Scientist ***www.newscientist.com***
WhyFiles ***whyfiles.news.wisc.edu/***

SEARCH ENGINES
Altavista ***www.altavista.digital.com***
Ask Jeeves ***www.askjeeves.com***
Dogpile ***www.dogpile.com***
Electric Library ***www.elibrary.com***
FAST ***alltheweb.com***
Google ***www.google.com***
HotBot ***www.hotbot.com***
Lycos ***www.lycos.com***
MetaCrawler ***www.metacrawler.com***
Northern Light ***www.nlsearch.com***
Pandia Search Central ***www.pandia.com***

SHOPPING
ONLINE AUCTIONS
Auction Hunter ***www.auctionhunter.co.uk***
Auction Universe ***www.auctionuniverse.co.uk***
eBay ***www.ebay.co.uk***
eBid ***www.ebid.co.uk***
eSwap ***www.eswap.co.uk***
Eurobid ***www.eurobid.com***
Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
QXL ***www.qxl.com***

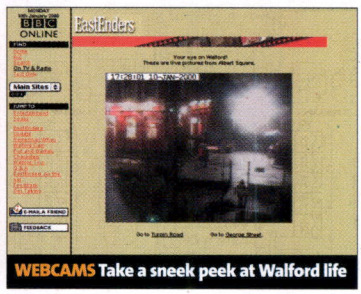
SHOPPING DIRECTORIES
Best of British ***www.bestofbritish.com***
Buckingham Gate ***www.buckinghamgate.co.uk***
Centreshop ***www.centreshop.com***
Enterprise City ***www.enterprisecity.co.uk***
IMRG ***shops.imrg.org***
Internet Shopping ***www.internetshopping.com***
ShopGuide ***www.shopguide.co.uk***
Shoppers Universe ***shoppersuniverse.com***
Shopping UK ***www.internetics.co.uk/shop/***
Shops On The Net ***www.sotn.com***
ShopYell ***www.shopyell.co.uk***
Taxi ***www.mytaxi.co.uk***
The Virtual Mall ***www.thevirtualmall.co.uk***
UK Max ***www.ukmax.co.uk/shopping***
UK Shopping Zone ***ukshoppingzone.co.uk***

SPORT
FA PREMIERSHIP CLUBS
Arsenal ***www.arsenal.co.uk***
Aston Villa ***www.astonvilla-fc.co.uk***
Bradford City ***www.legend.co.uk/citygent/index.html***
Chelsea ***www.chelseafc.co.uk***
Coventry City ***www.ccfc.co.uk***
Derby County ***www.dcfc.co.uk***
Everton ***www.evertonfc.com***
Leeds United ***www.lufc.co.uk***
Leicester City ***www.lcfc.co.uk***
Liverpool ***anfield.merseyworld.com***
Manchester United ***www.manutd.com***
Middlesborough ***www.mfc.co.uk***
Newcastle United ***www.newcastle-utd.co.uk/nufc/***
Sheffield Wednesday ***www.swfc.co.uk***
Southampton ***www.saintsfc.co.uk/index.htm***

PEOPLE FINDERS Try the other Sherlock

RADIO Fancy listening into a station far, far away? Try radio-on-the-internet.com

TV Settle down with www.channel4.co.uk



WEBCAMS Take a sneek peek at Walford life

Sunderland ***www.sunderland-afc.com***
Tottenham Hotspur ***www.spurs.co.uk***
Watford ***www.watfordfc.com***
West Ham Utd ***www.whufc.co.uk***
Wimbledon ***www.wimbledon-fc.co.uk***

SPORT A-Z

Athletics ***www.athletix.gr***
Basketball ***www.boxingpress.com***
Boxing ***www.boxingonline.com***
Cricket ***www.cricinfo.com***
Fishing ***www.fishing.co.uk***
Football ***www.footballnews.co.uk***
Golf ***Golf.com***
Hockey ***www.fieldhockey.com***
Martial Arts ***www.martial-arts-network.com***
Motorsport ***www.autosport.com***
Racing ***www.sporting-life.com***
Rugby League ***www.rleague.com***
Rugby Union ***www.rugby365.co.uk***
Skiing ***www.complete-skier.com***
Tennis ***www.itftennis.com***

STYLE AND FASHION

MAIN SITES

BeautyLink ***www.beautylink.com***
Boo.com ***www.boo.com***
Cosmopolitan ***www.cosmomag.com***
Elle ***www.ellemag.com***
Fashion And Beauty Internet Association ***www.fbia.com***
Fashion Icon ***www.fashion-icon.com***
Fashion Mall ***www.fashionmall.com***
FashionNet ***www.fashion.net***
Models.com ***www.models.com***
Salonweb ***www.salonweb.com***
Style Experts ***www.stylexperts.com***
Vogue ***www.vogue.com***

TOP LABELS

Armani ***www.armaniexchange.com***
Benetton ***www.benetton.com***
Diesel ***www.diesel.co.uk***
DKNY ***www.donnakaran.com***
Gap ***www.gap.com***
Levi's ***www.levi.com***
Paul Smith ***www.paulsmith.co.uk***
Red or Dead ***www.redordead.co.uk***
Tommy Hilfiger ***www.tommypr.com***
Wrangler ***www.wrangler.com***

TELEVISION

TOP SHOWS

Big Breakfast ***bigbreakfast.channel4.com***
Brookside ***www.brookie.com***
Coronation Street ***www.coronationstreet.co.uk***
EastEnders ***www.bbc.co.uk/eastenders***
Friends ***friends.warnerbros.com***
Hollyoaks ***www.hollyoaks.com***
Jerry Springer ***www.universalstudios.com/tv/jerryspringer/***
Neighbours ***www.neighbours.com***
X-Files ***www.thex-files.com***

TV COMPANIES

BBC ***www.bbc.co.uk***
Channel Four ***www.channel4.co.uk***
Channel Five ***www.channel5.co.uk***
ITV ***www.itv.co.uk***
Sky ***www.sky.co.uk***

TRAVEL

AIRLINES

Air Canada ***www.aircanada.ca***
Air France ***www.airfrance.com***
American Air ***www.americanair.com***
Britannia ***www.britanniaairways.com***
BA ***www.british-airways.com***
BM ***www.iflybritishmidland.com***
Buzz ***www.buzzaway.com***
Continental ***www.flycontinental.com***
Easy Jet ***www.easyjet.com***
Go ***www.go-fly.com***
Iberia ***www.iberia.com***
KLM ***www.klmuk.com***
Lufthansa ***www.lufthansa.com***
Qantas ***www.qantas.com.au***
United Airlines ***www.ual.com***
Virgin Air ***www.virgin-atlantic.com***

DESTINATION GUIDES

Australia ***australia-online.com***
Caribbean ***www.caribbean-travel.com***
France ***www.franceway.com***
Germany ***www.germany-tourism.de***
Greece ***www.areianet.gr/infoxenios***
India ***www.indiagov.org***
Ireland ***www.shamrock.org***
Italy ***www.travel.it***
Japan ***www.jnto.go.jp***
Portugal ***www.portugal-web.com***
Ski Club Of Great Britain ***www.skiclub.co.uk***
Spain ***www.spaintour.com***
UK ***www.visitbritain.com***
US ***www.go-unitedstates.com***

FERRIES

Ferry Savers ***www.ferrysavers.co.uk***
P&O ***www.poef.com/poef/index.htm***
Travel Britain ***www.travelbritain.com/UKPassengerFerries.html***
Travel.World ***www.travel.world.co.uk/ferries.htm***

RAIL TRAVEL

Euro Railways ***www.eurorailways.com***
Great Eastern Railway ***www.ger.co.uk***
Great Western Trains ***www.great-western-trains.co.uk***
Railtrack ***www.railtrack.co.uk***
Scotrail ***www.scotrail.co.uk***
UK Public Transport Information ***www.pti.org.uk***
Virgin Trains ***www.virgintrains.co.uk***

TRAVEL AGENTS

A2B ***www.a2btravel.com***
Airtickets ***www.airtickets.co.uk***
Bargain Holidays ***www.bargainholidays.org***
Biztravel ***www.biztravel.com***
Campus Travel ***www.campustravel.co.uk***
Cheap Flights ***www.cheapflights.co.uk***
Deckchair ***www.deckchair.com***
ebookers ***www.ebookers.com***
Expedia ***www.expedia.co.uk***
Internet Travel Services ***www.itsnet.co.uk***
Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
STA Travel ***www.statravel.co.uk***
Thomas Cook ***www.thomascook.co.uk***
Thomson ***www.thomson-holidays.com***
Trailfinders ***www.trailfinder.com***
Travelocity ***www.travelocity.com***

WEBCAMS

DIRECTORIES

Allcam ***www.allcam.com***
Camcity ***www.camcity.com***
Digital Camera Network ***www.dcn.com***
Earthcam ***www.earthcam.com***
Webcam Central ***www.camcentral.com***
WebCam World ***www.webcamworld.com***
Webviews ***www.webviews.co.uk***

FAVOURITES

AfriCam ***www.africam.com***
The Dolls' House ***www.bravo.co.uk/dolls***
Howletts Zoo ***www.howletts.net***
Interactive Model Railroad ***rr-vs.informatik.uni-ulm.de***
Jennicam ***www.jennicam.org***
Ultimate Taxi ***www.ultimatetaxi.com***
WalfordCam ***www.bbc.co.uk/eastenders/walfordcam***

WEB CENSORS

Cybersnoop ***www.pearlsw.com***
Cyber Patrol ***www.cyberpatrol.com***
Net Nanny ***www.netnanny.com***
Xcheck ***www.xcheck.net***

WEB DIRECTORIES

About.com ***www.about.com***
4anything ***www.4anything.com***
AOL Netfind ***www.aol.com/netfind***
Excite ***www.excite.com***
Infoseek ***infoseek.go.com***
Liszt (Mailing lists) ***www.liszt.com***
LookSmart ***www.looksmart.com***
Open Directory ***www.dmoz.org***
UK Plus ***www.ukplus.co.uk***
WebCrawler ***www.webcrawler.com***
Yahoo! ***www.yahoo.com***
Yell ***www.yell.co.uk***

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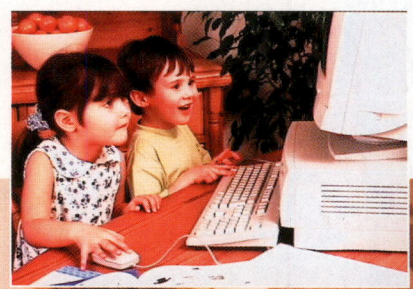
This is Freeserve, the UK's No. 1 for the Internet. Well over 1.6 million customers have already signed up with the nation's top Internet Service Provider and with even more members joining all the time, Freeserve is consolidating its position at the top of the tree.

You might wonder why Freeserve is so popular. Hopefully, reading the next 15 pages will help you to understand, and maybe even revolutionise, the way you use the Net. For a kick-off, there's the benefits of joining Freeserve – you get free access to the Net, unlimited free e-mail addresses and some gratis room on the Web to build your own website if you want to, plus the education, information and entertainment provided on Freeserve's ever-expanding home page. The only thing you pay for is the local call to connect.

If you're a bit confused by this Net malarkey, don't worry. It's all very easy, and Freeserve will guide you through the Web. Freeserve's home page at ***www.freeserve.net*** is the ideal starting-point for Net exploration, and the online help at ***www.freeserve.net/support*** will soon clear up any problems.

In this month's issue, there's an explanation of MP3, a preview of the rugby union Six Nations tournament and suggestions for Valentine's presents.

So how do you start? It's all explained on the Freeserve start-up CD, which you can pick up (free, naturally) at any branch of Dixons, Currys, PC World, The Link or @jakarta. Or, if you're already on-line, surf straight to ***www.freeserve.net***. Join the Freeserve revolution!



E-mail

Postbox? What's that?

The world is shrinking. If the Internet has gone towards creating the global village, then e-mail is its Post Office. If you've not caught on yet, you're missing out on a great new method of instantaneous communication – to anywhere in the world. E-mail is far cheaper than writing to friends, family and business contacts overseas, but better than that it's a great deal quicker – the mail gets to the recipient straight away, whether you're writing to New Zealand or Newport Haven.

And when you sign up with Freeserve, you get unlimited free e-mail addresses, paying only for the cost of the local call to connect up.

powered by

freeserve

www.freeserve.net

CHANNEL GUIDE

Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

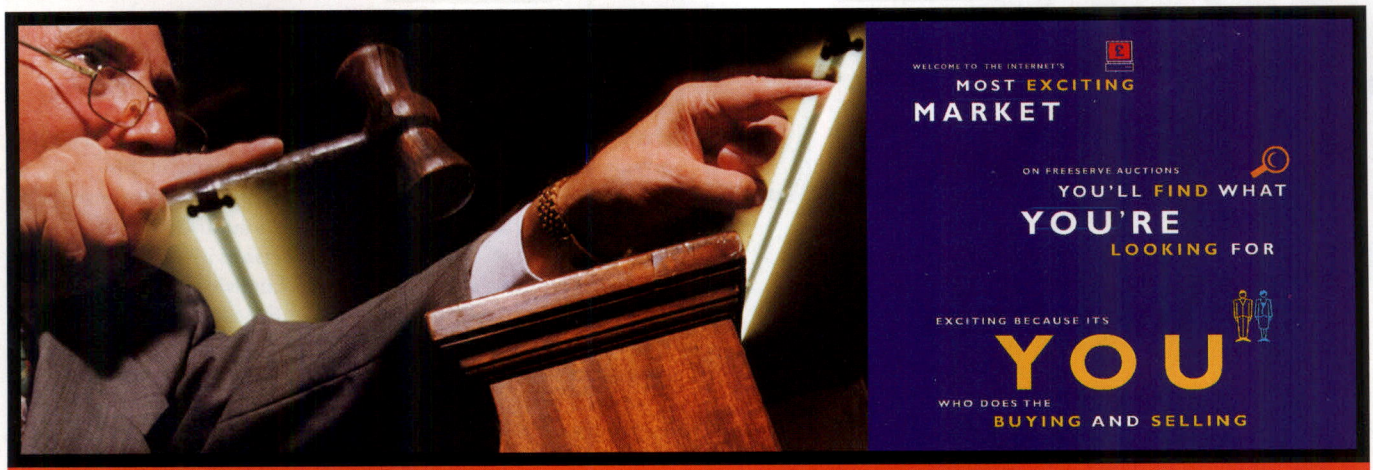
Books

Shopping for books can be hard on the feet *and* the wallet. Let BOL, our on-line bookshop, take the weight off both, with up to 50 per cent off the latest bestsellers. View our on-line bookshelves, and when you're ready to buy you'll find rapid ordering and delivery. Book some time on-line with BOL now.

bol.com™

Business Centre

Freeserve's recently redesigned Business Centre provides essential on-line resources for your small business. You can get business news, design business cards, enjoy cheaper and more effective communications and maximise your company's potential with our range of on-line business tools and resources. And you can register your very own domain name.



From books to Beanie Babies, CDs to TVs, it's all for sale on the fsauctions website – the Internet's most exciting market

fsauctions has the lot

Everyone loves a bargain! More and more people are discovering their easiest way of spotting that deal is through on-line auctions – and in particular, the fsauctions site on Freeserve at ***www.fsauctions.co.uk***.

Recently launched, Freeserve's on-line auction site is already proving to be a great success, offering visitors the chance to bid for anything from great last minute holiday deals to cars, computers and software and even football memorabilia.

'The site has already attracted a great deal of interest but we anticipate a massive increase in the number of people buying and selling on the site', says Stephen Wise of Freeserve. 'This in turn will attract even more people as they see a greater number of interesting items for sales and more potential buyers.'

It's the range of goods on offer which is a great draw to buyers and sellers alike.

'On-line auctions are an exciting area giving us all the chance to buy and sell almost anything from our own PCs,' continues Stephen. 'Whether you are looking for computers, antiques or pop memorabilia, there's something for everyone at ***www.fsauctions.co.uk***.'

The beauty of fsauctions is that it's not a hard sell. Just as there are several kinds of shopping in the High Street – serious purchasing, window-shopping or merely having a look around – so there are many different types of shopper frequenting fsauctions, from the determined bargain-hunter to those who are just curious about this rapidly-growing facet of the Net. Stephen outlines fsauctions' desire to cater for all surfers: 'We want Freeserve customers and other Internet users to enjoy visiting a fun and hopefully surprising site.'

Indeed, fsauctions does not intend to be just another auction site. Unusual items have already been auctioned on the site, and holidays from travel agent Going Places have been offered starting from just £21.

Jessica Hendrie-Liano and Kevin Murray from Hertfordshire are two of hundreds of Freeserve users who got a great last minute deal for the festive season through fsauctions. 'We were surprised by how easy it was to book the holiday,' says Jessica, 'and by the excitement of competing against others bidding for the same holiday'.

Stephen Wise wants to make fsauctions into the UK's most customer friendly on-line auction site. 'We want to know what customers think about the site and how they would like it to change in the future.'

CHANNEL GUIDE

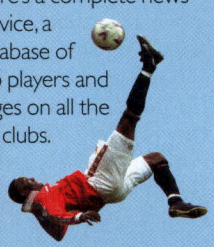
Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

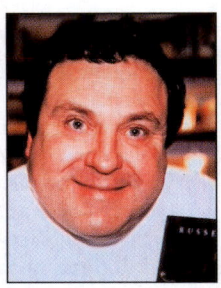
Food and drink

From recipes to restaurant guides and cocktails to competitions, there's everything you could possibly need to feed your food fetish. Check out the weekend recipes and wine recommendation.

Football

Barmy about the beautiful game? The football channel caters for even the most obssessive fan. There's a complete results service, full table listings and stats for clubs from the Premiership down. And there's a complete news service, a database of top players and pages on all the big clubs.





Horoscopes

Let a star read your stars! Celebrity astrologer Russell Grant offers daily, weekly and monthly readings for all star signs. Or you can even get your own personal horoscope for the year 2000 for just £19.99.

Money

Freeserve has all the latest figures on every major firm and financial instrument, along with comment and analysis from the best in business, including Motley Fool and Mrs. Cohen. If you feel like challenging your investment skills, try playing the fantasy share portfolio game.

Music

Whether it's the Beatles or the Beastie Boys you can find news, reviews and event listings on everything musical. You can buy gig tickets and CDs on the Net in seconds, and take your time over features and news stories.

he Net

Our Site

A site to behold

The Internet is such a huge and uncharted place, it's easy to get lost in cyberspace. What you need is a good strong starting point which will point you to the best of the Web rather than wandering about wondering where to go next.

Freeserve's homepage at *www.freeserve.net* does just that. It will introduce you to some of the Net's best features while always providing you with a place to call home.

At the site, you'll find several excellent channels stacked with entertainment, information and education. From the women's channel iCircle to the sports and TV channels, from communications to careers, films to football and money to music, you'll find whatever you need on Freeserve. See the bottom of this page and the next two pages for further details on these and more channels.

There's the latest news, updated minute by minute in true Net style, plus the breaking stories in business, sport and weather. There are channels for the sport fan, there's information for the film buff and entertainment aplenty.

In fact the only trouble with Freeserve's homepage is that there's so much to do, you might never leave!

Your Site

Your home on the Net

After a while surfing other people's sites on the Net, you might want to make your own presence felt. Luckily, when you join Freeserve you're given the space to set up your own website – 15 megabytes of it, which is more than enough to establish a sizeable site. However, it's held on Freeserve's central computers so you don't overload your machine – but you can access it whenever you want.

To start with, building your own website might sound like rocket science but it's really quite simple – there's free software available (again, through Freeserve) to help you, and all the instructions are laid out in plain English on the Freeserve website. After all, there are 80 million websites in the world, and far fewer rocket scientists...

Sweet music

If you're wondering what on Earth everyone means by all this MP3 nonsense, turn to our handy bluffer's guide

page viii

Free Time

How to get completely free time on the Net

Freeserve was set up to bring you the Net for free. That's why you pay nothing for unlimited free e-mail addresses, not a penny for your 15 megabytes of free cyberspace to build your own website, and zero pence for all the entertainment and information channels on *www.freeserve.net*. Freeserve charges you absolutely nothing for your time on the Net.

The only thing you have to pay for is the price of the call (local, no matter where you live and where on the Net you're going) to connect to the Web. This charge is out of Freeserve's hands, but if you register for the Freeserve Time offer you can get up to ten hours of totally free Net time per month by dialling 162 before making long-distance telephone calls.

For example, if you spend £3 on calls via the 162 service, you'll get three hours of free time on the Web, and so on up to 10 hours' free Net time. Every month, you'll get an itemised bill via e-mail saying how much free time you've collected. For more details on the Freeserve Time offer, check out *www.freeserve.net/time*.

'Freeserve charges you nothing for your time on the Net'

Careers

We've got the world of work wired. Our Careers channel lets you search databases of 70,000 jobs nationwide and even apply on-line. You can submit your CV and allow employers who need your skills in your area seek you out. Let Freeserve help you find your dream job.

Chat

Freeserve's ever-popular chat service is a great hit. Now you can use our new 3D chat rooms to get around and explore virtual reality worlds – you've got to try it to believe it!

Communications

Speechmail lets you access e-mail by phone, the e.notifier e-mail to pager service keeps you in touch with your e-mail account while you are offline, and Prestophone brings you big savings on your phone bills with an Internet-based phone account.

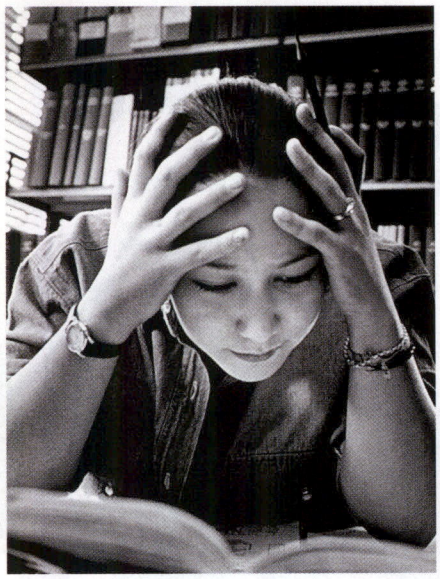
Education

From pre-school through to GCSE, the Freeserve Education channel provides the interactive environment that is needed to encourage learning new skills.

Film and Cinema

If you're a fan of the silver screen, Freeserve gives you what you want. There's news of all the latest cinema and video releases and plenty on all the big blockbusters. Play games, read news and enter competitions – you'll be way too busy to go to the movies!

Telegraph Colour Library



Learning support

The Freeserve education channel has long strived to help students get the best from the Net – the National Association of Head Teachers-backed GCSE revision aid helped secondary school scholars who've recently sat their mocks – and a new partnering deal helps higher education students do the same.

Freeserve and BIDS will be joining forces to assist student searches for subscription journal, periodical and database information. BIDS services are used by more than 70 per cent of higher education institutions, and soon BIDS will be available through Freeserve.

Libraries and universities around the UK will receive a CD-ROM which, when loaded, will allow students to navigate seamlessly into BIDS through Freeserve's usual free access and content.

Paris by Concorde

The month of February has established itself as the most romantic in the calendar, mainly thanks to Valentine's Day. Meanwhile, Paris has long been viewed as the most romantic city in Europe, if not the world. So how about entering a competition to win a romantic break for two to Paris – by Concorde?

The winners will be whisked to Paris by the supersonic jet. The flight only takes an hour and 40 minutes, but that's long enough for the champagne breakfast which is part of the prize!

Then it's time for a bit of sightseeing around the lovely French capital – by luxury coach. Finally, the winners will embark on another romantic mode of transport for the journey back to Blighty: the Eurostar train, first class of course, with dinner served en route.

For details on how to enter this superb competition, check out Simply Food on Freeserve's food and drink channel. Simply Food gives you all the latest information on recipes, healthy eating and nutrtition, besides giving you the chance to sweep your loved one off their feet...

Women on the move

iCircle, the women's channel, is constantly getting bigger and better. There are several new features to The Passport travel section which are being introduced just as thoughts turn to an escape to the summer sun.

The Passport already features resort reports, family breaks, health spa guides and a list of family-friendly hotels among other things, but a host of new features have recently been added. These include a consumer's guide to your travel rights, a jargon-buster and holiday health advice.

Another innovation is the five-minute guide. This is a quick introduction to a subject so you can decide whether to pursue your interest. Among the topics covered are retreats, ecologically sustainable travel, long-haul short breaks, ranch holidays and homeswapping.

There are also community boards where women can advertise for travelling pals, and post questions about locations they're destined for. Then there's the guide to travelling solo and the frequently updated Best Deals section, which is tailored to your individual needs. With the on-line booking, you'll soon be up, up and away!

www.Thepassport.co.uk

powered by

free serve

www.freeserve.net

News

Get tomorrow's papers today with a superb news service. You'll get all the latest UK and foreign stories, together with business news and a complete rundown of headlines from the national press.

Shopping

Freeserve's new SHOP@freeserve channel can provide flowers or food, a car or a computer. Look out for great deals and special savings in the January sales. Save time and money – shop direct from your desktop!

It's easy and safe to SHOP freeserve

Sport

Whatever your sport, you'll find it on Freeserve. Cricket, rugby, Formula 1 or golf; you can get the results and follow your heroes on the Sport channel. If you're into football, there's a separate dedicated channel, giving other sports the room to have their coverage here!

Travel

Click on Freeserve's travel channel for instant access to a database of 70,000 flights and holidays worldwide. There are always sensational last-minute deals on offer. Also check out the on-line travel guide featuring all you need to know on your destination, with climate, maps, money, getting visas and much more.

TV and radio

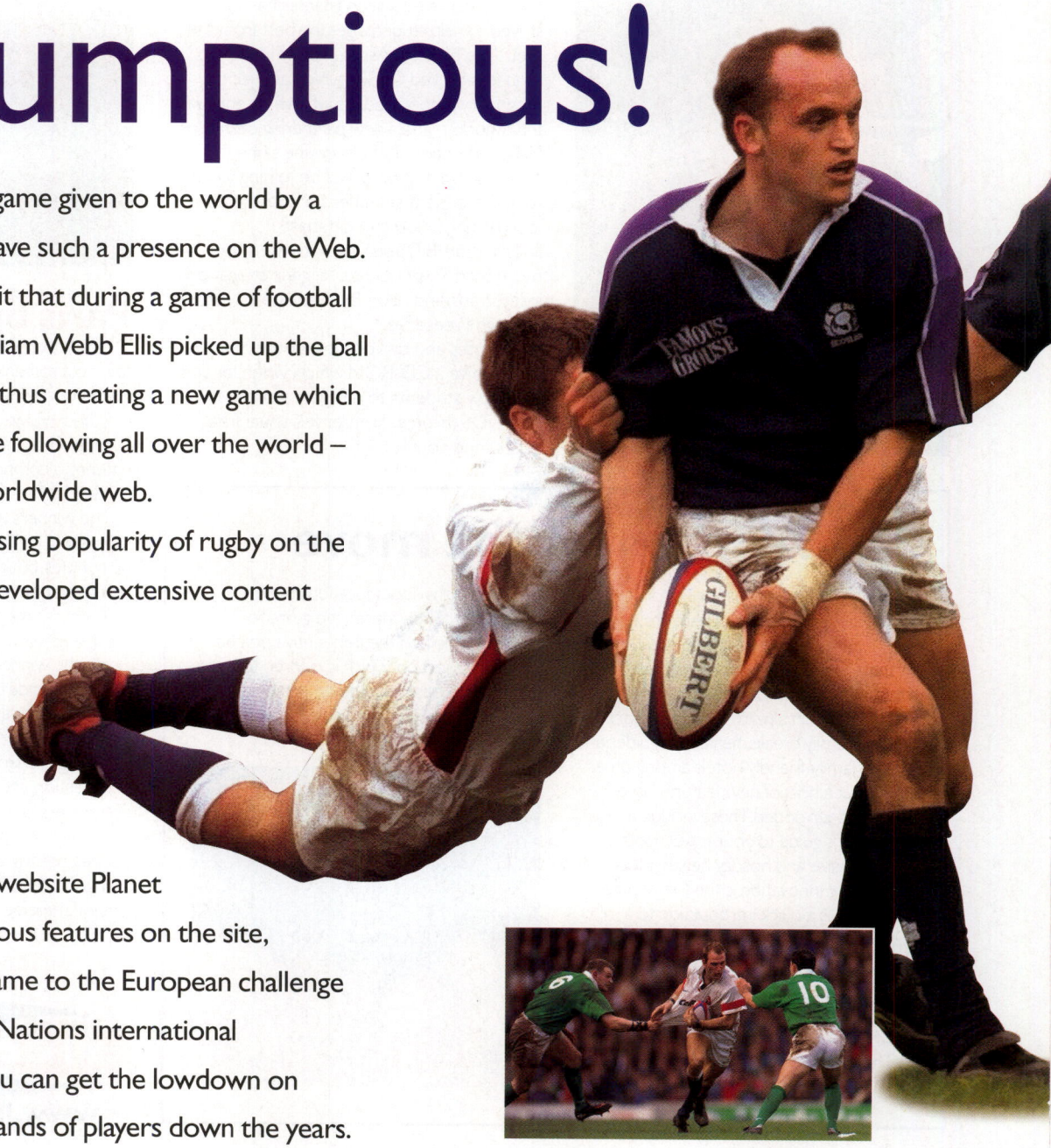
Not only do we give you full TV and radio listings specific to your area, our critics will even advise you on what to watch if you just can't decide. But only if you can tear yourself away from Freeserve!

Steve Orino, Telegraph Colour Library, Retna, Action Images, World Pictures

Scrumptious!

It's fitting that a game given to the world by a Webb should have such a presence on the Web. The legend has it that during a game of football at Rugby School, William Webb Ellis picked up the ball and ran away with it, thus creating a new game which has developed a large following all over the world – and therefore the worldwide web.

To mark the increasing popularity of rugby on the Net, Freeserve has developed extensive content about the 'game for hooligans, played by gentlemen' on the ever-expanding Sports channel, in association with top website Planet Rugby. There are various features on the site, from the domestic game to the European challenge to the upcoming Six Nations international tournament – and you can get the lowdown on thousands and thousands of players down the years.



Home and abroad

The Allied Dunbar Premiership is the country's top club competition, where the stars of the international scene ply their trade on a weekly basis. Freeserve brings you all the latest results and match reports from the Premiership, with regular updates of the results and tables. There's also all the latest news from the domestic scene, which you can even have e-mailed to you on a daily basis.

As in football, the country's top clubs go on to compete in a continental tournament, the European Cup; last year Irish side Ulster won a fairytale final against French side Colomiers in front of a capacity 49,000 crowd in Dublin. Just as you can with the Premiership, you can follow the progress of the competition on Freeserve, with all the latest results and news on your desktop.

The definite article

One of the site's finer points is the Features section, which showcases exclusive columns from some of the game's top names. You can get regular insights into the sport at the top level from Aussie legend Michael Lynagh, the world record points scorer and World Cup winner affectionately known as 'Noddy'. Another expert witness is England regular Richard Hill, who brings reports from the top of the contemporary game.

Complementing the players are the professional writers. There's the universally respected Sunday Times chief rugby writer Stephen Jones, renowned for his knowledge and no-nonsense approach. And bringing the news from over the water is the USA's premier rugby writer Alex Goff. All these exclusive regular columns can be read on Freeserve.

Six appeal

February sees the beginning of the world's oldest and most famous international rugby tournament, and this time it's bigger and better than ever. Until this year, the Five Nations championship has been fought for by England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France. However, in the spirit of European unity and as an embodiment of the continued expansion of rugby union, Italy have been invited to join the fun – which of course makes it the Six Nations championship.

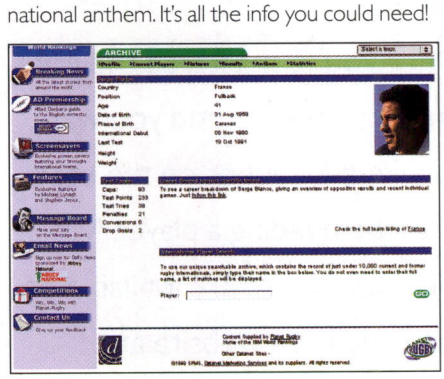
Last year's Rugby World Cup was a tremendous success, bringing the cream of the international crop to these shores and creating a superb new venue in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium, the redeveloped Cardiff Arms Park. It's a home the famous Welsh rugby nation can be proud of, and they'll be hoping it will boost their attempts to win the Six Nations – although their old English, Scottish and Irish rivals will have something to say about that, as will the continental challengers. Last year the Scots triumphed, and the other home nations will want their own moment of glory this season. And of course, you can follow all the action with reports and statistics on Freeserve's rugby service.

Find your man

One of the most amazing features on the new rugby site is the huge player database. The career details of more than 10,000 players have been compiled in this impressive archive, which stretches all the way back to 1871. You can look up the career statistics of such giants of the game as Bill Beaumont, JPR Williams and Serge Blanco, right up to the present day heroes like Lawrence Dallaglio and Neil Jenkins.

The service furnishes you with information on each player's country, position, international debut and last game, and gives you his total number of caps, test points, test tries, penalties, conversions and drop goals. You can check each player's performance against different nations, plus of course details like his height, weight, age and birthplace.

Then there's the national team statistics. You can look at countries' current squads, performances down the years, record wins and defeats and even discover the words to the national anthem. It's all the info you could need!



Action Images

MP3: The future of

MP3: What's it all about? It's not a trio of Parliamentary candidates, nor is it the start of a postcode. But it could be the future of popular music. It's a musical revolution that's happening on the Internet, and Freeserve is here to guide you through it.

Come on, feel the noise

In the past while surfing the Web, you may have come across sound files and been asked to download them. Ten minutes of downloading later, pressing play will have caused a cacophony not far removed from a child's dabbling on a Bontempi keyboard to wail from your speakers. And your hard drive space will have been greatly reduced by the whacking great soundfile you've just suffered through. Not exactly the multimedia experience you expected.

All this has now changed with the advent of MP3s. It's the music system of the future, and this handy guide will help you through the maze. Phrases in red are explained in the glossary.

What's the big idea?

Previous audio formats, such as .WAV files or MIDI files, either took up your entire hard drive or seriously compromised quality until they sounded like a scratchy 78rpm gramophone record. The great idea behind MP3 is that it digitally compresses sound files removing sounds and frequencies humans can't hear. Switching to MP3 reduces the file size by up to 12 times without deterioration in quality because you couldn't hear the removed information anway. And as the files are digital, they're still top quality.

So sound files are 12 times smaller and much better quality, which is a good payoff. Now they don't take as long to download, which means you spend less time on-line waiting around, which is cheaper on your phone bill. And the files don't clog up your hard drive.

That's the theory lesson out of the way; now for the practical, because it's better to listen to music than just to understand how it works.

Where do I plug it in?

You need two major pieces of kit to play MP3 files. No, put your money away: the first one is a computer and the second is access to the Internet, and it's a fair bet if you're reading this that you've already got both (or soon will have). So it's not a major investment.

That's the hardware, now for the software. Surf the Net for MP3 (which is now the most common query word submitted to search engines) and you'll soon find sites such as ***www.mp3.com*** or ***www.mp3now.com*** which will be more than happy to provide the software for you to download to your desktop.

Time for tunes

Now you're ready to play. As with so much in life now, this is simply a matter of surfing the Internet and finding what you want. You could search for half-a-million tunes at ***mp3.lycos.com***. Groundbreaking MP3 pioneers like David Bowie (***www.bowie.com***) and the Beastie Boys (***www.beastieboys.com***) are now being joined by most top acts, but besides pop songs, you can download anything from TV themes (try ***tv.cream.org***) to church bellringing (***www.rdsb.freeserve.co.uk***; see page 13).

It may be that you already have an extensive CD collection and you want to convert tracks into MP3 files. This is possible with a smart piece of software, downloadable from the Net, called a CD ripper. Despite the threatening name it won't damage your CD; it just reads the digital information and converts it into a .WAV file on your hard drive. You can then change this into smaller MP3 files using encoder software – again, available on several Internet sites. Then you can make compilations of your favourite MP3s.

Once you've mastered the MP3 on your desktop and you want to take your tunes on the road, you'll be needing a player. All these and more are available on the Freeserve website at *www.freeserve.net/mp3*

Diamond Rio 300

Trailblazing player which, at £99, won't break the bank. The Rio 300's 32 megabytes of memory will store 30 minutes of near-CD quality music – or an hour of FM quality music. And just one AA battery will give you 12 hours of listening pleasure.

Maycom

A bargain waiting to be snapped up: you can save £30 with the on-line price of £99 by surfing to ***www.freeserve.net/MP3***. In addition to 32Mb of memory, providing up to 30 minutes of playback, the Maycom features a built-in digital FM radio.

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free serve
www.freeserve.net

music

MP3 on the move

So, you've played MP3s on your computer, but that's only the half of it. Back in the early Eighties the advent of the Walkman revolutionised music as fans used tapes to listen to their favourite tunes on the go; portable CD and MiniDisc players followed, and MP3 is no exception. Now, with the advent of MP3 players you can take those compilations you've compiled with you down the road and sing while you're shopping.

MP3 players are extremely stylish, cool pieces of kit. The design is helped by the use of digital technology; there are no moving parts, meaning they are economical on battery power as there are no parts to 'turn'. This also makes MP3 players very compact and lightweight; whereas personal tape and CD players can never be smaller than the format they support, MP3 players fit in the palm of your hand.

And as an added bonus, the absence of mechanisms within the MP3 players mean there's no 'jumping' – so you can use your player while exercising.

Is it legal?

You might have heard that the music industry is in a complete tizzy about MP3. It's true that there are lots of illegal sites out there selling copyrighted music, and as with other formats (including tapes), it's illegal to trade copyrighted songs with other people unless you have obtained permission from the copyright holder of the song.

However, it is perfectly legal to create MP3s for your own personal use only. For now, the best advice is to stick to reputable sites such as the ones mentioned above.

WHAT'S THAT MEAN?

A handy glossary of terms.

BURNER – Also known as a CD burner, this is a hardware CD recorder which writes audio files, such as WAV or MP3, onto a computer CD. Available to buy.

ENCODER – A software programme which converts an audio file into MP3 format, or in and out of other file formats. Available to download off the Net, and often comes with the package when you buy an MP3 player.

MP3 – Short for MPEG Layer 3, it's an audio compression standard used to record, store and play digital music and other audio files.

PLAYER – Also known as an MP3 Player. There are two kinds: a software programme which plays MP3 files on a desktop, portable or handheld computer, or the hardware electronic device – like a personal stereo – onto which you can load and play MP3s.

RIPPER – Software programme used to transfer audio from a CD, or other audio source, onto a computer file.

WAV – A file format used for audio. The former industry standard, WAV files are much larger than the equivalent MP3 file. WAVs are still used but are often converted to MP3 file format in order to be smaller and therefore quicker and easier to download and store.

LG MF-PD330

With a supersleek slim and sexy design, this £119 cracker has 32Mb of memory – easily extendable to 64Mb – and bookmarking, both for MP3 tunes and radio stations.

Saehan MPMan F30

Another of the new-generation MP3 players (keep up!) the £199 MPMan's 64Mb is upgradable to 96Mb with a Flash memory card. It displays track info in a variety of languages. And it's even designed so wannabe singers can record their own voice…

Diamond Rio 500

The Rio 300 made its mark on the MP3 scene, and now Diamond have improved upon the theme. The 64Mb of memory is again expandable to 96Mb, so the £239 Rio 500 will give you more music than most. There's also a USB port for faster downloads.

Retna, Telegraph Colour Library

Lovers: all you need

Valentine's Day is here, and you'd better start looking for the perfect present. As usual, Freeserve is on hand to help you search for great gifts to make your loved one happy.

The big day is coming, the day circled in red and filled with love-hearts on every calendar in the land: Valentine's Day. It's the day when lovers express their joy at each other's continued existence, and shower gifts befitting that special someone.

It's a day of great joy for those who have found the perfect present for their loved ones, but it can be a time of hideous embarrassment and shame for those who haven't delivered the goods. So how can you make sure you're in the good books and not the doghouse?

As ever, Freeserve is there to make things better. Whether you've been organised and allowed yourself plenty of time to choose your tokens of love or you're in a desperate rush for a last-minute present, the ever-expanding SHOP@freeserve site gives you a plethora of goodies to sweeten up your better half.

SHOP@freeserve helped thousands of satisfied customers to secure no-fuss Christmas presents without having to brave the High Street crush, with gifts delivered straight to your door – or the recipient's. And last month, thousands more flocked to SHOP@freeserve to take the opportunity to snap up bargains in the January sales – with some goods on offer at less than half their original price.

The options are so extensive on SHOP@freeserve, the only trouble you'll have is deciding what to buy. It could be that you have a specific gift in mind, in which case a quick leaf through the list of partners will soon provide you with an outlet which will fulfil your needs.

However, it's often the case that you'll be stumped for ideas for a present to buy your loved one. If so, you're lucky because SHOP@freeserve features a plethora of sites with good ideas for gifts.

For instance, there's SF Cody, whose description 'The Ultimate Gift Solution' isn't far wrong. A brief flick round the site will find a fund of fun ideas for affecting gifts designed to make those eyes light up, from a toast-rack on wheels to a £7,000 jet-ski.

Propagangsta is more of the same, with inflatable furniture and toy 'mad cows' among the fun gifts to be had. There's The English Teddy Bear Company for those who like their friends fluffy, while those who like a tipple will love Lastorders.com.

If your loved one likes to be pampered, check out Perfume Shopping, Class Cosmetics and Lookfantastic.com. Or if it's electrical goods you're after you could try Dixons or PC World.

You could always play it safe – or back up your more off-the-wall choices – by perusing the Interflora section, and you can't go wrong with Thornton's chocolate.

Whatever your, or more accurately your loved one's, heart desires you'll find it on SHOP@freeserve.

2000 Valentines

powered by freeserve
www.freeserve.net

Valentines 2000

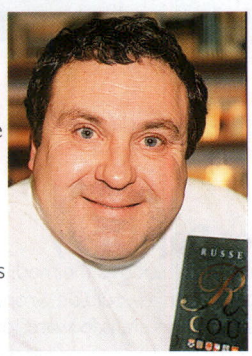
The evening before Valentine's Day sees the climax of the Valentines 2000 campaign, launched by The Mirror and powered by Freeserve. And one lucky loving couple will win a luxury holiday.

Valentines 2000 has searched Britain for the nation's most romantic couple by inviting nominations from the public. The heartwarming tales of love generated in response included those who'd been separated by the miles or years, those who'd braved hostility to stay together and those who'd ingeniously kept the spark going for years.

The six regional winners from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, North of England, Midlands and South of England will be at the Savoy Hotel for a gala ball on Sunday 13 February. The half-dozen cuddling couples won't be the only lovers on view at the glamorous bash: among the celebrity couples invited are David and Victoria Beckham, Zoe Ball and Norman Cook, Hugh Grant and Liz Hurley and the Earl and Countess of Wessex.

On the night, which will be filmed by GMTV for transmission the following morning (Valentine's Day), guests will see each coupled profiled on film and briefly interviewed, with the overall winners announced and presented with their award, a luxury romantic holiday – for two, of course.

Horoscopes



For some people, stargazing is as important as gazing into their loved one's eyes. If your partner turns straight to the horoscope page of the newspaper and reads out the 'stars' for everyone in the room, perhaps you could get them a suitably starstruck Valentine's present.

Every day, the world's most famous astrologer, Russell Grant, posts his horoscopes on the Freeserve site at *www.freeserve.net/horoscopes/*. Astrology fans can read their forecasts for the day, but that's not all; Russell also provides long-range forecasts for the week, and even the month, so you can tell whether it's going to be a good month in love and luck.

However, if your loved one really has an eye for the stars, you could treat them to a personal Millennium Horoscope. Produced by Freeserve in association with Russell Grant, the Millennium Horoscope is a bumper 12-month package calculated from the recipient's birth details.

An in-depth forecast for the full year 2000, the Millennium Horoscope is delivered to you via e-mail for you to refer to throughout the year. In fact, it's so in-depth, it's over 100 pages long when printed...

For information on how to order your Millennium Horoscope, which is just £19.99, surf to *www.freeserve.net/horoscopes/millennium.htm*.

Cheat's guide

If you're struggling for ideas for buying Valentine's gifts, try:
Perfume from Perfumeshopping.com at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/perfume.htm
Jewellery from Beaverbrooks at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/bb.htm
Clothing – lingerie for her from Maple Drive at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/mapledrive.htm
and menswear for him from OutletXpress at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/outletexpress.htm
Flowers from Interflora at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/interflora.htm
Holidays from
www.bargainholidays.com/freeserve/a_sun_search.shtml
Wine from Wine & Co at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/wineandco.htm
Chocolate from Thorntons at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/thorntons.htm
Gadgets from SF Cody at
www.freeserve.net/shopping/retailers/sfcody.htm

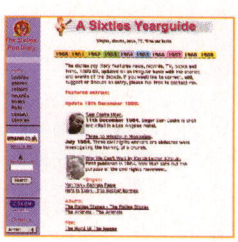
The Freeserve Promise

SHOP@freeserve offers customers peace of mind through its upholding of the Freeserve Shopping Promise. All partners on the site have to agree to abide by the terms of the Promise, which gives:
Security by guaranteeing a safe shopping experience;
Choice by offering several brands from traditional High Street retailers to the new on-line retailers;
Quality and value for money by providing a wide variety of products at competitive prices;
Customer service with a pledge to commitment from the retailers; and
Privacy by ensuring all retailers work within the Data Protection Act to safeguard customers' privacy.
You can see the full text of the Freeserve Promise at *www.freeserve.net/shopping/promisefull.htm*.
In addition, Freeserve offers the marbles credit card, which is guaranteed to be safe and secure against Net fraud. marbles has no annual fee and is perfectly usable in the High Street as well as on the Net.
See *www.fscard.co.uk/?ad=XP3* for further details.

Telegraph Colour Library, Rex Features, Retna

Space of My Own

What links Sixties pop, bellringing, *Braveheart* and amateur photography? They're all subjects Freeserve members have chosen to cover on their 15 megabytes of free Web space.



The Sixties Pop Diary

The Net has rightly been hailed as the medium of the new millennium, but it would be wrong to imagine that all of its content is forward-looking. Indeed, the Web has already earned acclaim for its use as a research resource, boosted by sites such as The Sixties Pop Diary.

Site owner Roger Purbrick has collated the swinging decade's top records – singles and albums – and organised them into years so you can check out the pick of the pops from each year, highlighting some of the entries to give you the stories behind the tunes.

However, the site isn't just poptastic; it also deals with each year's top books, films and TV shows to give you a complete picture of the entertainment of the year. And as if that wasn't enough, there's also the chance to look back at the major news stories of each year, and there's even a few overviews of the decade's fashion, culture and music genres.

But be warned, you might be tempted to start wearing flowers in your hair…

www.sixtiespop.freeserve.co.uk/

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www.freeserve.net

MacBraveHeart

It's amazing what watching a film can do. John and Linda Anderson settled down one night to watch the Mel Gibson movie *Braveheart*, and were inspired to produce a website so indepth and impressive that the BBC and the publicity department of the new Scottish Parliament have been in touch for advice and information.

The story of William Wallace has long fired the hearts of many, including some who weren't previously aware of Scottish politics. The MacBraveHeart site bears testimony to this, with dozens of messages attesting to the power of the film – which John and Linda have watched 50 times!

While Wallace favoured revolution, devolution has recently granted a certain amount of Scottish independence. Like the Braveheart story, the site links easily with this topic and gives a run-down of the events leading to this historic devolution.

There's also news on conventions, Wallace Days, merchandise, books, pictures and of course all the information it's possible to read about the film.

Give it a go and join the tartan army.

www.macbraveheart.freeserve.co.uk

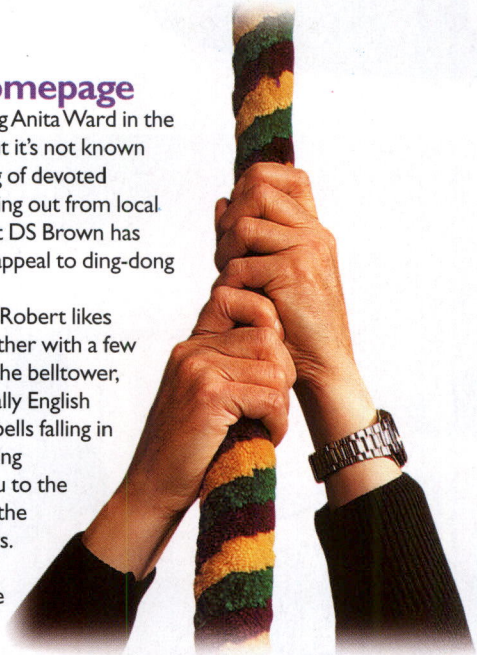
Bellringing Homepage

'You can ring my bell,' sang Anita Ward in the Seventies disco classic, but it's not known whether she was thinking of devoted bellringers whose peals ring out from local churches. Even so, Robert DS Brown has created a site which will appeal to ding-dong devotees everywhere.

Based near Dartmoor, Robert likes nothing better than to gather with a few friends and pull ropes in the belltower, creating the quintessentially English country noise of church bells falling in musical unity. His bellringing homepage introduces you to the pastime, with the help of the local Bovey Tracey Ringers.

You might not think of bellringing as cutting-edge but Robert hasn't been slow to incorporate the latest technology, and as a result you can hear peals from all over Devon in MP3 format. There's also an interactive map linking to pictures of belltowers around the Dartmoor region, so if you're in the area you'll know where and when to open your ears.

www.rdsb.freeserve.co.uk/



Llandudno Photographic Society

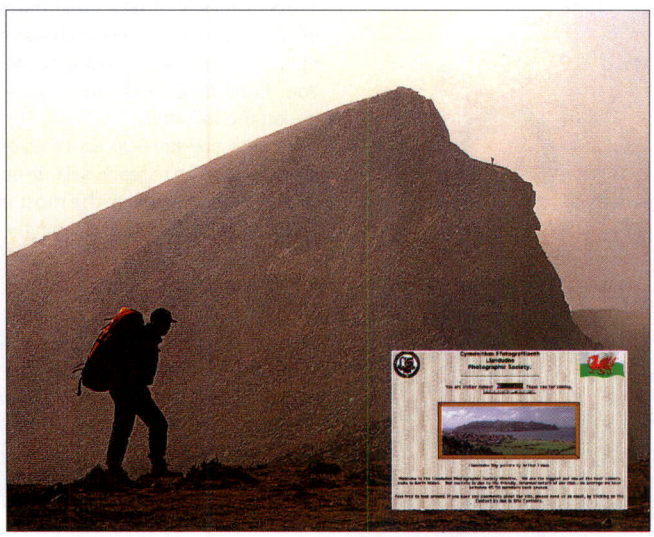
One of the great pleasures of the Net is coming across so many good images. As a repository for pictures, photos and drawings, it's second to none, giving people the world over the chance to log on and find the image they want.

The happy by-product of this is that keen amateurs also have a place to display their wares and feel the thrill of their pictures being in the public domain. Such is the ethos behind the Llandudno Photographic Society website.

Webmaster (and vice-chair) Brian Hall has been busy working in the true spirit of the Net by gathering details of other camera clubs around the country, and links to these sister sites will be posted soon.

Interest in the society's site has been high, with Canadians seeming particularly intrigued. Maybe it's because the society members are on the doorstep of the beautiful scenery of Snowdonia. The majestic mountains are well documented on the site, which also gives details of the history and upcoming schedule of the society.

www.llps.freeserve.co.uk/



Telegraph Colour Library, Image Bank, Retna, Kobal, Derek Edmondson

Setting out your **store**

Want to sell on the Web, but it all seems too complicated? Freeserve will help you plan the best way to get your business on-line.

Remember when the Internet seemed a scary place you never dreamed you'd understand? When you thought the phrase Internet Explorer could never apply to you? Freeserve helped you through the maze then, and now you're up and surfing.

The same applies to getting your business on the Net. E-commerce continues to grow; a recent survey revealed that more than half of all surfers had made purchases on-line, and the percentage is only going to increase. Your business could be making it – and raking it – on the Internet.

As with any start-up ventures offline, though, your first step in setting up your store on the Web is probably the most important. That stage is, of course, planning.

Step 1: Understanding the e-commerce opportunity for your business

E-commerce is set to reach new heights within the next few years, representing a fantastic opportunity for all UK businesses and entrepreneurs. To fully understand the potential of the Web for your customers and your range of products, you need to sit down and do some thinking.

It's estimated that over 200 million people use the Internet worldwide. This therefore means that once your store is live on the Web, you could receive orders from far-flung places around the globe. Increased exposure leading to increased demand is obviously a fantastic advantage the Web brings, but it's important to consider your strategy for fulfilling those orders – especially if you are working on your own or offering specialist crafts, for example. Note, though, that you can take full advantage of the discounted delivery rates negotiated for you in the Freeserve Postroom at *www.freeserve.net/postroom*.

It's also worth considering pricing. Often goods on the Web are slightly cheaper than offline as overheads and maintenance costs are much lower. You therefore need to consider your pricing structure – do some competitive analysis and map out your revenue plan.

Step 2: Planning your on-line store layout and navigation

As with all major steps, it's a good idea to plan out your store in advance. If you added floor-space to your business you wouldn't bung

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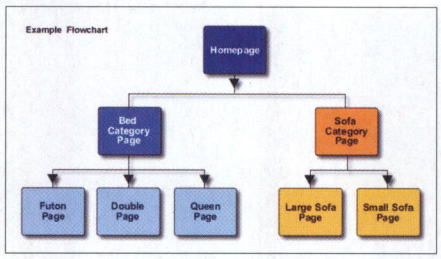


things in haphazardly; nor should you take a cavalier approach to laying out your site.

Start off by sketching out a diagram of what you want your store to do, like a flow chart, with different categories and sub-categories for your products and services, and then make a list of the items you want in each category. You'll see that this chart is similar to a real store; the homepage is the shop window and each category is like a department in a department store.

Don't worry if the structure looks a little rigid, the beauty of an on-line store is that you can quickly and easily change your contents as and when you wish to tempt shoppers to purchase. You can also include any of your items in as many categories as you like.

Keep it simple. If users find your site difficult to navigate, they won't come back. Clearly identify your products and services on your homepage, or potential buyers may surf off elsewhere. And keep it consistent; don't change your store layout too many times, as shoppers will get used to your navigation – but do keep updating an area of your site with deals, offers and discounts to lure browsers.

Step 3: Consider how you will grow sales through your on-line store

Once your store is on the Net, you will need to consider how best to cost-effectively promote your store ahead of your rivals.

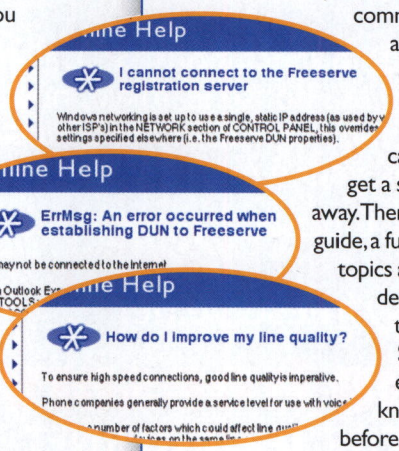
Importantly, try offline exposure: give out your store's Web address on all stationery and business cards to encourage visits. On-line, there are several avenues to explore, including listing your store with search engines, listing your store with on-line Business Directories and registering with an on-line banner advertising exchange programme. Most importantly, make your content interesting.

The opportunities are huge, but the thing to consider is having a strategy for promoting your store taking into consideration the costs associated with each. Freeserve Business Centre will help you with this; link to *www.freeserve.net/businesscentre* where you'll find details on all these opportunities.

free serve www.freeserve.net/support

On-line help

We've put together an awesome set of answers for all your technical queries. It's available on our website – and it's free!

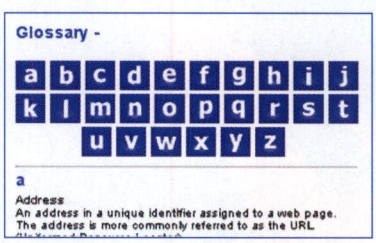


What are my options?

If you're new to the Net, Freeserve is committed to making it as easy as possible for you to get on-line. We've designed the help section on the Freeserve website so you can turn to Freeserve and get a straight answer, straight away. There's a complete content guide, a full alphabetical index of topics and a find function – all designed to take you straight to the answer you need. Separate sections deal with everything you need to know to avoid problems before set-up, and tell you what to expect as you begin to install the software from the CD-ROM onto your machine. It really is that easy!

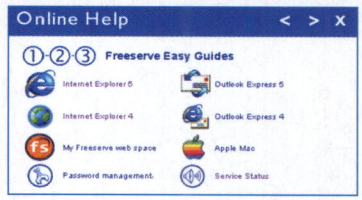
How does on-line help work?

It's easy! There are four main sources of information. Read through the descriptions below and you'll soon see which best suits the type of query you have. Then connect to Freeserve, visit the help section and get all your questions answered quickly.



The Glossary

If there's an Internet expression you don't understand, turn to our glossary first. It's more than likely to be there.



The Easy Guides

If there's an area of your Net use that is causing you difficulty, turn to our Easy Guides for a complete solution. You'll find answers sorted by subject.

Questions and Answers

If there's a specific question you need answered, turn to our Q&A section for rapid help. First select the general area from our drop-down menu, then a specific question. You may find your question has already been answered.

Contacts

If you still need help, you can e-mail our support staff. They're the same people who man our phone helpdesks, and they're trained to deal with your queries. Direct e-mail addresses are listed on the contacts page. They'll be happy to help you!

How do I find answers on the CD?

Alternatively, there's also a fully comprehensive Help feature on the Freeserve start-up CD-ROM. When you put the CD in your machine you'll be given four options. The help button takes you to a comprehensive set of instructions to enable you to get on-line with Freeserve.

Phone-line help

Our experts are on call 24 hours a day

Using Freeserve's on-line help couldn't be simpler, but from time to time you might have a direct question for one of our experts. To help you get the most out of your connection, Freeserve's Technical Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Make sure you've consulted our on-line help before you call, as you may find we've already answered your question. If not, our trained staff can provide you with instant answers in plain English on a range of Net subjects. Calls cost 50p per minute.

PC Support 0906 2517517 Mac 0906 7234000

Telegraph Colour Library, Hulton Getty

Now the world is your e-mail

Suddenly, your world is at your fingertips, wherever you are, thanks to **fs**mail from Freeserve.

This new web-based service will allow you to send and receive e-mails, via the Internet, to and from any PC, anywhere in the world.

From your desk in Derby to a ranch house in Dallas; a cyber café in Cambridge to a tea house in Tokyo, now you have the power to get your message across in an instant. And you can collect and read your e-mails too.

New **fs**mail from Freeserve is personal, portable and secure.

Visit www.freeserve.net

"I found it on freeserve"

THE UK'S No1 FOR THE INTERNET

free serve

www.freeserve.net

To make Freeserve your Internet Service Provider, sign up on-line or pick up a free CD at any branch of

Dixons PC WORLD THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE Currys The Link @jakarta

stepbystep

From how to email your mates to holding your own in a heated newsgroup debate, you'll find it here. Plus, we tell you how to break into the online gaming world

Your technical problems well sorted with our easy-to-follow guide to the Net

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet is a huge global network of computers, with literally millions of machines connected together across the planet.

HOW DO I GET ON IT?

All you really need is a computer, a modem, an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and a telephone line.

WHAT CAN I DO THERE?

1 **Surf the Worldwide Web.**
2 Send someone an email.
3 **Take part in a newsgroup discussion.**
4 Make friends and get chatting with people from all over the world.

CONTENTS

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Spoilt for choice? Find the ideal one for you with the help of our guide

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Annihilate fellow man in our essential guide to online gaming

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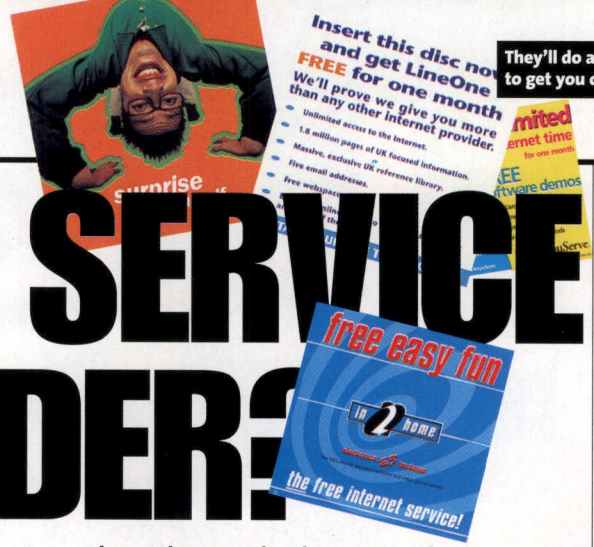


WHAT SERVICE PROVIDER?

March 2000 They all want you to subscribe with them. So how are you going to choose the right ISP? Easy – use our guide!

What is an ISP?

An Internet service provider, or ISP, is a company that connects you to the Internet. All you need do is exploit the provider's permanent Net connection by connecting to it.

Get the best ISP deal

Right now, literally hundreds of ISPs are vying for your business – which is great news for consumers. But to help you make a truly informed decision, we've tested the best service providers on the market.

Below, you'll find our ratings for the current crop of the best ISPs looking to connect you. There are several companies that are now offering completely free access – and that includes the price of the phone call that connects you to the Internet. LocalTel pioneered this service back in the spring with the launch of Screaming.Net. Since then several companies have started to offer free calls to the Net at certain times of the day. CallNeto800 has also launched and is offering completely free access at any time of the day. This new breed of ISP is set to change the landscape of Net access in the UK, as several other service providers investigate the possibility of offering completely free access in a bid to keep up with new trends. In other words, the future couldn't be brighter for Net consumers, as the price of getting online continues to go down.

Call costs

It's worth checking how much you'll be paying for the phone calls that connect you to the Net. Apart from the new breed of free services, nearly every ISP charges local call rates. For BT customers, this means 4p/min on weekdays between 8am-6pm; 1.5p/min during off-peak times, and 1p/min at the weekend. Check with your phone company.

Speeding up

To say things are only going to get faster is an understatement. BT is currently trialling ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line). It will offer an 'always on' high speed connection to the Internet with data delivery speeds of 10-40 times a conventional modem. At the moment, most modems operate at 56kbps (kilobits per second) or less. For more info see ***www.bt.com/adsl/***

BEGINNER'S TIP

Put the phone number you use to dial up to the Internet on your BT Friends and Family list.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Set up several free accounts. If for any reason you cannot connect to one provider, simply try another one. There's no limit to how many accounts you have.

ADVANCED TIP

Consider installing an extra phone line. It means you can have one for the phone and one for your modem, so you can use the Internet as much as you like.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
Aardvaak **FREE**	***www.aardvaak.co.uk***	London-based ISP which promises no banner advertising	Unlimited
AngliaNet Limited	***www.anglianet.co.uk***	Dial-up, web hosting and design for home and business users	Unlimited
AOL	***www.aol.co.uk***	A large ISP offering proprietary software to try to make connecting painless	Unlimited
Aviators Network	***www.aviators.net***	An ISP designed with aircraft-related content for the pilot and the enthusiast	Unlimited
BIGWIG **FREE**	***www.bigwig.net***	Clear and well-presented – free Internet access in a complete package	Unlimited
BREATHE **FREE**	***www.breathe.co.uk***	Well-established free ISP. Easy-to-use site design	Unlimited
Btclick.com **FREE**	***www.btclick.com***	The free Internet service from British Telecom, with no monthly charge	Unlimited
BT Internet	***www.btinternet.com***	Another Internet arm of BT offering a full access package	Unlimited
Bun **FREE**	***www.bun.com***	The free ISP offering of *The Sun* newspaper	Unlimited
Cable and Wireless Lite **FREE**	***www.cwcom.net***	Free Net access for CW customers	Unlimited
CALLNET **FREE**	***www.callnetuk.com***	Innovative free ISP offering enhanced Web-based services	Unlimited
CIX	***www.cix.co.uk***	The Compulink Information eXchange. Provides Internet conferencing accounts	Unlimited
ClaraNET Ltd	***www.clara.net***	Subscription based ISP with a range of account options to suit any needs	Unlimited
Compuserve	***www.compuserve.com***	Long-standing ISP who offers proprietary software to aid ease-of-use and level of service	Unlimited
Connect Free **FREE**	***www.connectfree.net***	One of the very first free ISPs	Unlimited
CYBERphile Internet	***www.cyberphile.co.uk***	Business-oriented, Midlands-based provider. Specialists in leased lines, LANs, firewalls, ISDN etc	Unlimited
Dabsol **FREE**	***www.dabsol.net***	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Demon Internet	***www.demon.co.uk***	The UK's original dial-up account today aspires to be the industry's 'Premium' service	Unlimited
Direct Connection	***www.dircon.net***	Home and business ISP offering global roaming among their services	Unlimited
Easynet Ltd	***www.easynet.net***	Subscription based dial-up service. Winner of best European ISP at this year's ISPA awards	Unlimited
EidosNet **FREE**	***www.eidosnet.co.uk***	EidosNet is brought to you by Eidos, publishers of Tomb Raider and other great games	Unlimited
Enterprise plc	***www.enterprise.net***	Subscription based ISP with a host of features including game and news servers	Unlimited
F9 Free **FREE**	***www.f9.net.uk***	Free ISP from previously subscription-only service Force 9	Unlimited
Firstnet Services Ltd	***www.firstnet.co.uk***	Business Internet solution provider	Unlimited
FirstWeb	***www.first-web.co.uk***	ISP based in Middlesex. Provides Internet solutions for businesses	Unlimited
Free Internet **FREE**	***www.free-internet.co.uk***	Free access, free mail and Web space. Comprehensive service in a neat package	Unlimited
FREENET **FREE**	***www.freenet.co.uk***	More free access with a gaming bias. Online auto sign-up and newsgroups add to the interest	Unlimited
Free Online **FREE**	***www.free-online.net***	Straightforward free ISP offering news and email	Unlimited
Freeserve **FREE**	***www.freeserve.net***	Free provider from the Dixons Group of companies	Unlimited

ISPs explained Using our easy-to-follow guide

FREE CONNECTIONS
There are now many companies that will get you on to the Internet without charging a subscription fee – the only thing you pay for is the price of the phone call that connects you.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
Despite the plethora of free ISPs springing up, there are still many which charge a flat monthly fee. These generally offer free technical support, whereas most free ISPs charge by the minute.

CONTENT PROVIDERS
Content providers also charge to get you online, but provide exclusive content to members, and a sense of 'community'.

How the tables work

Description
A brief description of the services offered by the ISP in question.

Type of service
Tells you whether there is any restriction on how often you can use the Internet.

Phone number
The number to ring if you want to sign up.

Email addresses
Some service providers give you only one email address, others provide as many as you want.

Content
Outlines whether the service provider in question provides its own content and whether it is exclusive to its users.

Macintosh support
Not all service providers offer software and technical support for Macs, preferring to concentrate on PCs – so be sure to check this column out if you're an Apple user.

Web space
If you are interested in designing your own Web page, most Internet Service Providers will give you space to store it on. 2Mb should be enough for most people's requirements.

Set-up fee
Some ISPs charge a fee to open an account.

Monthly charge
If you don't go with a free ISP, then you'll pay a set amount per month to be online.

Phone support charges
Technical support is great – as long as you're not having to pay a fortune to benefit from it. Find out how much free service providers charge per minute for calls to their technical support desks.

Telephone support hours
The hours when the technical support desk will be open to take your calls.

Our ISP testing is carried out by NetBasics, an independent company specialising in providing ISP information for consumers and businesses. NetBasics makes every effort to ensure that the data presented to you is correct. The publishers of *the Net* and NetBasics cannot be held liable for any damages caused by the publication of this data. Any Internet service provider that wishes to be included in the evaluation programme should contact eval@netbasics.com **For more information on NetBasics, visit its Web site at *www.netbasics.com*.**

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
Sign up online	1	None	No	0	0	0	Unavailable	n/a
01473 211922	1	None	Yes	5Mb	None	11.75	Mobile	9-5 M-F, 8-9 S-S
0800 3765432	5	Massive amount of content	Yes	10Mb	0	16.95	Free	8-10.30M-F 9-9.30S-S
0700 2842867	1	'Flightalogue' lists a host of goodies	No	15Mb	0	11.75	Standard	9-9 7 days
01509 651451	5	None	No	15 Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	9-9 M-F, 10-8 S-S
0870 6006006	5	Entertainment, sport, shopping, finance etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 800001	Unlimited	From Excite	Yes	0	0	0	50p per minute	8-12 Midnight
0800 800001	5	None	Yes	10Mb	0	11.75	Local	24/7
0845 3063636	5	Online dating, Bunshopping, *The Sun* online etc	Yes	25Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 0923 001	5	Channels and account administration	No	20 Mb	0	0	National	24/7
0171 3358300	5	Chat servers, channels, services, Web news	Yes	20Mb	0	0	Free	24/7
0845 3555050	Unlimited	None	Yes	30Mb	0	17.61	Local call	9-10 M-F, 12-6 S-S
0800 3582828	Unlimited	None	Yes	25Mb	0	8.99	Free	24/7
0990 000200	5	A large range of channels and a search engine	No	10Mb	0	16.95	National	8-12 Midnight
Sign up online	Unlimited	Channel-based content provided by Virgin	No	Unlimited	0	0	Unavailable	24/7
01543 454840	1	None	Yes	0.1Mb	0	11.74	Standard	8.30-6 M-F
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	Unlimited	0	0	Metered	24/7
0181 3711234	Unlimited	None	Yes	20Mb	0	11.75	Local	24/7
0800 0720000	Unlimited	User zone containing handy member services	Yes	20Mb	0	13.50	Local	9-9 7days
0171 6814444	Unlimited	None	Yes	2Mb	0	11.99	Free	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Free access to the Mplayer games network	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
01624 677666	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Local	9-10 M-F 10-4 S-S
0800 0737800	Unlimited	None	Yes	15Mb	0	0	National	7-11, 7 Days
0113 294 4224	Unlimited	Search engines and support	Yes	10Mb	0	12.50	Local	Business hours
0870 7409223	4	None	No	5Mb	0	7.73	Local	24/7
Sign up online	1	Newsgroups and IE5 download	No	10Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
01329 511611	Unlimited	Games links and independent status	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National rates	9-6 7 days
0870 7060504	5	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	Premium rate	24/7
0990 500049	Unlimited	Extensive channel based content	Yes	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
Free to You **FREE**	***www.free2you.co.uk***	No frills free ISP with online sign-up	Unlimited
Freeway **FREE**	***www.freewayuk.com***	Free access, email and Web space in a neat package	Unlimited
Freewire **FREE**	***www.freewire.net***	Free ISP with no sign-up requirements	Unlimited
Freezone **FREE**	***www.freezone.co.uk***	A free ISP offering the usual package in a smart format	Unlimited
Gateway 2000 **FREE**	***www.ukgateway.net***	An ISP service from the hardware retailers of the same name. Packaged with Gateway computers	Unlimited
Go Free **FREE**	***www.gofree.co.uk***	Free ISP offering online sign-up, complete with helpline	Unlimited
IC24 **FREE**	***www.ic24.net***	The free ISP service of Mirror Group Newspapers	Unlimited
LineOne **FREE**	***www.lineone.net***	British Telecom's Internet service has recently dropped its subscription charge	Unlimited
London Web Comm Ltd	***www.londonweb.net***	An emphasis on corporate clientele. Useful London Local Directory	Unlimited
Netcom	***www.netcom.net.uk***	A comprehensive range of services to the home and business user	Unlimited
Paradise Internet Network Service	***www.pins.co.uk***	Paradise Internet is a subscription provider which also authors software	Unlimited
Screaming.net **FREE**	***www.screaming.net***	The pioneer of the free access and free phone call model	Unlimited
Sonnet Internet Ltd	***www.sonnet.co.uk***	Packages and solutions for the private and business user	Unlimited
This is it! **FREE**	***www.thisisit.co.uk***	End-user targeted free ISP	Unlimited
UK Fantastic **FREE**	***www.ukfantastic.net***	Spirited free ISP offering good online technical help	Unlimited
UK Online Ltd **FREE**	***www.ukonline.co.uk***	A family friendly free ISP with plenty of shareware and gaming software. Sign up online	Unlimited
UK People **FREE**	***www.ukpeople.net***	Free ISP, online chat, set-up and help	Unlimited
Virgin Net **FREE**	***www.virgin.net***	Long-standing ISP now offering a stylish free Internet access service	Unlimited
Which? Online	***www.which.net***	A free ISP from the consumer affairs magazine of the same name	Unlimited
Wireplay Internet **FREE**	***www.wireplay.com***	Wireplay is an online games network offering access to Intranet-based fast games servers	Unlimited
X-Stream Network **FREE**	***www.x-stream.com***	Offers enhanced member services, such as occasional free phone calls to the Net	Unlimited

Network performance

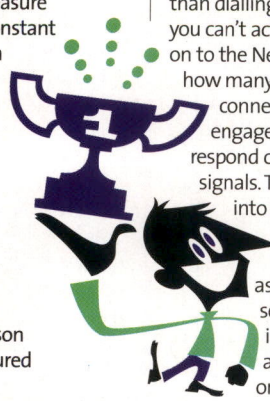
March 2000

Independent testing carried out by NetBasics – contact eval@netbasics.com

We test the best ISPs in the country for the reliability and speed of their connection. The tests are conducted in three areas and a star rating is given indicative of their performance. The three areas of testing are:

VARIATION IN MODEM SPEED

This is a gauge to measure whether you get a constant speed once a modem connects to an ISP. ISPs should offer a constant speed and we measure any variation. Each ISP starts with 100 percent and loses position the greater the variance in connection. This is achieved by comparison so that no ISP is favoured above others.



VARIATION IN TIME TO CONNECT

This section of the test measures the variation in how long it takes to get connected to your ISP. The reading is taken from the stage between clicking 'Connect' and then physically connecting.

AVAILABILITY

There's nothing more frustrating than dialling your ISP and finding you can't actually get through and on to the Net. This area measures how many times an ISP refuses to connect, either through the engaged tone, or if it does not respond correctly to modem signals. The results are combined into a single reading giving us a fair way to chart ISPs based on relevant aspects of their dial-in service. The results shown in the chart are based on a sample of 50 ISPs from ongoing tests.

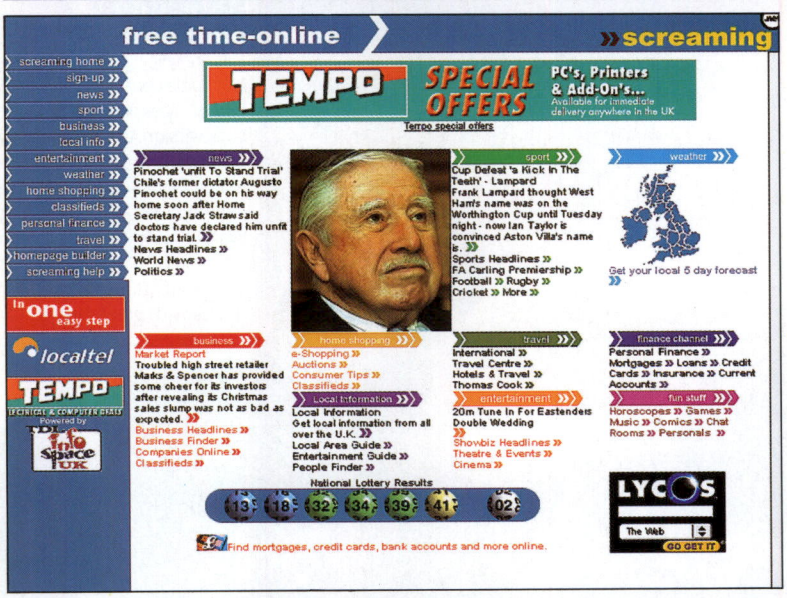
FIRSTNET Services Limited

1	Firstnet	★★★★★	
2	Netcom	★★★★★	
3	Cyberphile	★★★★★	
4	Wireplay Internet	★★★★★	
5	AngliaNet	★★★★★	
6	Enterprise	★★★★★	
7	This is it!	★★★★★	
8	BT Internet	★★★★★	
9	LineOne	★★★★★	
10	Aviator's Network	★★★★★	
11	Direct Connection	★★★★★	
12	Callnet	★★★★★	
13	Gateway 2000	★★★★★	
14	London Web Com	★★★★★	
15	Free Internet	★★★★★	
16	Sonnet Internet	★★★★★	
17	Freewire	★★★★★	
18	Paradise Internet	★★★★★	
19	BT Click	★★★★	
20	Free Online	★★★★	
21	F9 Free	★★★★	
22	Freenet	★★★★	
23	Freeserve	★★★★	
24	Free To You	★★★★	
25	Dabsol	★★★★	
26	Easynet	★★★★	
27	Eisdosnet	★★★	
28	Bun	★★★	
29	Go Free	★★★	
30	Compuserve	★★★	
31	Breathe	★★★	
32	Virgin Net	★★★	
33	AOL	★★★	
34	Demon Internet	★★★	
35	X-Stream Network	★★★	
36	ClaraNet	★★★	
37	UK Online	★★★	
38	Screaming.net	★★★	
39	Which? Online	★★	
40	CIX	★★	
41	Freezone	★★	
42	Cable and Wireless	★★	
43	IC24	★★	
44	Aardvark	★★	
45	Connect Free	★★	
46	UK Fantastic	★★	
47	UK People	★★	
48	Bigwig	★★	
49	First Web	★★	
50	Freeway	★★	

what service provider?

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESSES	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
Sign up online	Unlimited	Search engine page and technical support	No	10Mb	0	0	Available soon	n/a
Sign up online	Unlimited	News, sport weather and shopping	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	50Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0870 7441111	Unlimited	On-site search engine access	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
At Gateway Stores	Unlimited	None	No	10Mb	0	0	Free	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
0870 9090262	Unlimited	Channel based content with news, sport, weather	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 111210	5	News, shopping, sport, community etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	8-Midnight M-Sa
0181 3494500	3	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	14.68	Standard	9-9 M-Sa
0870 5668008	20	A business oriented portal site	Yes	25Mb	0	14.95	National	24/7
01256 414863	1	None	Yes	2Mb	17.63	9.40	National	11-7 M-F
Sign up at Tempo	Unlimited	Travel, entertainment, business, sport etc	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0171 8912000	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	12.50	National	9-9 M-S
0906 9124000	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	24/7
01749 333333	1	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	An online community, games and downloads	No	5Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0500 558800	5	Several Virgin channels	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0645 830240	1	Online shopping and consumer affairs content	Yes	2Mb	11.75	14.75	Free	24/7
0845 757 7577	0	Games news, games chat, games add-ons	No	0	0	0	50p per minute	12pm-12 am, 7 days
0870 7306466	1	Chat, news, lifestyle, shopping, etc	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7

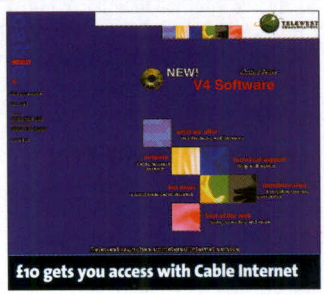
ISP NEWS IN BRIEF All the service provider news you need



Scream to stay online longer

The country's first completely free ISP, Screaming.net, has extended its cut off period from two to three hours, meaning that users will be able to stay online for up to three hours at a time. Screaming.net has no phone charges during off-peak times (as long as subscribers swap their existing telephone company for Localtel), and despite suffering teething problems in its infancy, the service is said to be improving all the time.

www.screaming.net



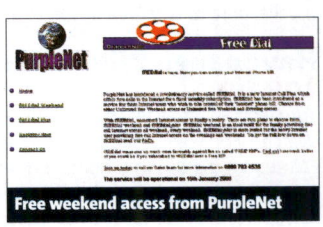
connection via their Cable Internet ISP. There will be no phone charges, and users can go online for any amount of time for the £10 fee.

www.cableinet.co.uk

It's the weekend

PurpleNet has introduced a new Internet service called fREEdial, which offers 0800 access (free calls) during weekends and 0845 access at all other times for £11.75 a month, or £128 a year. There is a two-hour cut-off for users, who must wait 20 minutes before signing on again.

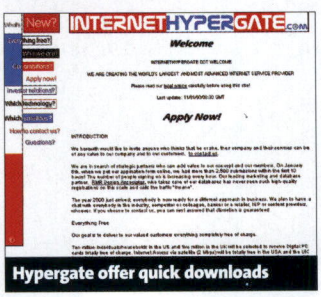
www.purplenet.co.uk/freedial/



Dodgy name, great service

A new business is promising to offer free access to the Net via satellite, letting users download at speeds of up to 2Mbps – most users connect using modems at 56kbps. InternetHyperGate.com will provide set-top boxes and PC cards to five million UK Net users. In return they will probably be expected to fill in a questionnaire about their Web habits, and use the company's credit card to buy goods online. The service is expected to launch in April; you can register on the site now.

InternetHyperGate.com



Go West

Cable giant Telewest has announced it is to offer an unmetered Internet service for £10 per month with

Beef up your PC

PC getting a bit sluggish? You don't necessarily need a new one; these hardware upgrades will make it roar

We've heard it all before. You've had your PC for a while. Maybe you've even considered trading it in for another model with a go-faster chip, or perhaps even a garish iMac.

Well, you could go out and blow your hard-earned on a brand-spanking-new system, but stop and think for a while. Wouldn't forking out on a serious upgrade be more effective at coping with your increasing demands? Whether your budget is £100 or £1000, there's a whole load of goodies you can bolt on to your computer that will transform that dull old box into a multimedia monster, a desktop publishing system second to none, or a gamer's total dream machine.

To that end, we've put together a mouth-watering selection of kit based around three price points, kicking off with a bargain range of goodies all at less than £100 each.

All are available at these prices from your nearest PC World store. And if you don't know where that is, check out the storefinder at ***www.pcworld.co.uk***. Now get upgrading!

UNDER £100 APIECE

The Hival CD-RW drive is the most useful bargain of this lot, enabling you to burn your own music CDs and backup important data

Hival CD-RW £100

Though not the fastest rewritable CD drive on the planet (but then speed costs), this is nevertheless a versatile internal drive. It can burn CDs at 2x, but can also operate as a 24x CD-ROM drive. It comes with the flexible Easy CD Creator software package, which makes burning your own CDs, music or otherwise, a walk in the park.

Voodoo 3 2000 PCI £79.99

If you've got a slightly aging PC (anything over a couple of years) then this graphics card will enable you to enter the modern era without a costly motherboard upgrade. Fast, versatile and extremely powerful, the Voodoo 3 will both boost games performance and streamline Windows functionality.

Umax Astra 2000 £79.99

Cheap but incredibly powerful, the Astra 2000 is a flatbed scanner that runs at resolutions as high as 600x1200dpi. Import treasured photos or turn your home or office into a paperless nirvana by scanning bills, receipts, invoices or even recipe ideas and storing them on your PC. Uses a standard parallel port, so works well with older PCs.

Hauppauge Win TV Radio £99.99

Turn your PC into a real multimedia workstation. Watch TV on your desktop, listen to the radio (in FM stereo), digitise your home movies with the S-Video socket and catch up with the news on Teletext. It even comes with a remote control. Note: requires a PC capable of bus mastering.

Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro £49.99

Not to be confused with the hideously expensive force-feedback version, this excellent stick is the perfect accompaniment to any flight sim or one of the big robot games, such as Mech Warrior 3. Digital and accurate, it connects to a standard soundcard gameport and comes with great drivers.

WORDS: ANDY HUTCHINSON; PHOTOS: NICK WRIGHT

UNDER £300

Once you get into this price bracket you can add some great peripherals. Splash out on an Encore 6x DVD drive or put together a package of cheaper items...

FLYER'S DELIGHT £297.98

Voodoo 3 3000 £129

An advanced AGP card that can seriously boost the frame rates (and therefore smoothness) you experience in games. Equally at home with 3D action games like Unreal Tournament, the Voodoo will also make Windows usage faster and less of a strain on the eyes thanks to high resolutions and quick refresh rates.

Logitech Wingman Extreme £29.99

Logitech is one of the major PC controller manufacturers, with solid and very well supported products. No exception, the Wingman Extreme is popular with flight sim fans thanks to its precise mechanism and vast array of configurable buttons.

Microsoft Flight Sim 2000 £39.99

This is used as a training tool for prospective pilots due to its realism and attention to detail. Flying everything from a Sopwith Camel to Concorde, this amazing simulation can download weather info from the Net and incorporate it into your flight.

Microsoft Digital Speakers £99

PC speakers have come a long way since the days of the manky beige pepper pot. These Microsoft digital puppies come with a monster sub-woofer for real wallop in the low end of your games, but sound equally at home with music.

DVD DREAM £258.99

Creative DVD Encore 6x £159

Instead of buying a dedicated DVD player, why not add DVD to your PC and enjoy the best of both worlds. Capable of playing back DVDs on your monitor or TV and outputting the sound in full AC-3 (6 speaker) surround sound, this superb package comes with a hardware decoder card and a DVD-ROM drive.

SoundBlaster Live! Value and Creative 4 Point Surround Speakers £99.99

From the best soundcard range on the market, the SB Live! Value brings a whole new dimension to your PC audio. Capable of outputting sound to multi-speaker systems, the Live! also adds real-time effects to games, boosting that 'being there' feel. It's also a superb card for anyone who wants to make music on their PC. The excellent Creative speakers work brilliantly with the SB Live! soundcard, offering full surround sound effects to games. Hear gun shots whistling overhead and footsteps creeping up behind you.

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WHAT HI-FI?

UNDER £1000

Spend some money on decent peripherals for your existing PC and you extend its shelf life, while expanding your own creative options. Take this desktop publishing package, for example

THE 'MURDOCH' £976.99

HP DeskJet 880c £179

Hewlett Packard produce superb peripherals, and this colour inkjet printer is no exception. Capable of churning out pages nearly as fast as a laser printer and operating at resolutions up to 600x600dpi, it's the perfect home office colour printer.

Fuji MX 2700 Digital Camera £499

Kiss goodbye to expensive film developing forever, with this superb compact digital camera. With a 2.3 million pixel CCD (which captures beautifully crisp images) and a funky built-in TV display, the MX 2700's performance is as good as its looks. Transfer your images to your PC with the supplied software and add them to your brochures or Web sites.

Paintshop Pro 6 £99.99

An extremely adaptable graphics retouching package, Paintshop is nearly as good as the ultra-expensive Photoshop. Scan images directly into the program and sharpen them, add text or special effects and then save them in your desired format.

HP Scanjet 5200C £199

Flexibility is the key strength of this excellent scanner. It can plug into either parallel or USB ports (the latter is recommended for reasons of speed) and comes with excellent software including Adobe Photodeluxe and Pagekeeper. Capable of scanning at up to 600x1200dpi in 32-bit colour, the Scanjet also comes with some of the best drivers we've ever used.

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GVC 19-inch Monitor £299

Most PCs are crippled by being supplied with small and inferior monitors. Upgrade to a nice big monitor like this 19-inch example and you can play games in much higher resolutions, without them looking like postage stamps. Weighing in at a very reasonable price-point, this high-resolution monitor has good clarity and neat styling.

Voodoo 3 3500 £199

Capable of chucking the most complex gaming scenes around like they were wire-frames, the Voodoo 3 3500 is a very powerful graphics card. With the right monitor it can display games in resolutions beyond 1152x864 and positively thrives on graphics-intensive titles like Quake 3 Arena.

UNDER £1000

Transform your games by treating them to the latest video cards, stacks of RAM and some decent controllers

GAME HEAVEN £935.98

Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel £99

When it comes to racing games, joystick and mouse controls just don't cut it. What you need is a steering wheel like you get on the best arcade machines. Featuring both wheel and pedals, the Sidewinder is the only controller to consider if you want the best for your PC. Its realistic feel stomps all over the cheaper ones, and with the force feedback, you'll feel every lump and bump in the road.

Saitek Cyborg 3D Joystick £39.99

For all your shoot-'em-up requirements, the Cyborg should serve you brilliantly. Bristling with configurable buttons and complete with a throttle control (perfect for those flight sims and space games), it's also one of the most comfortable joysticks we've ever taken for a spin.

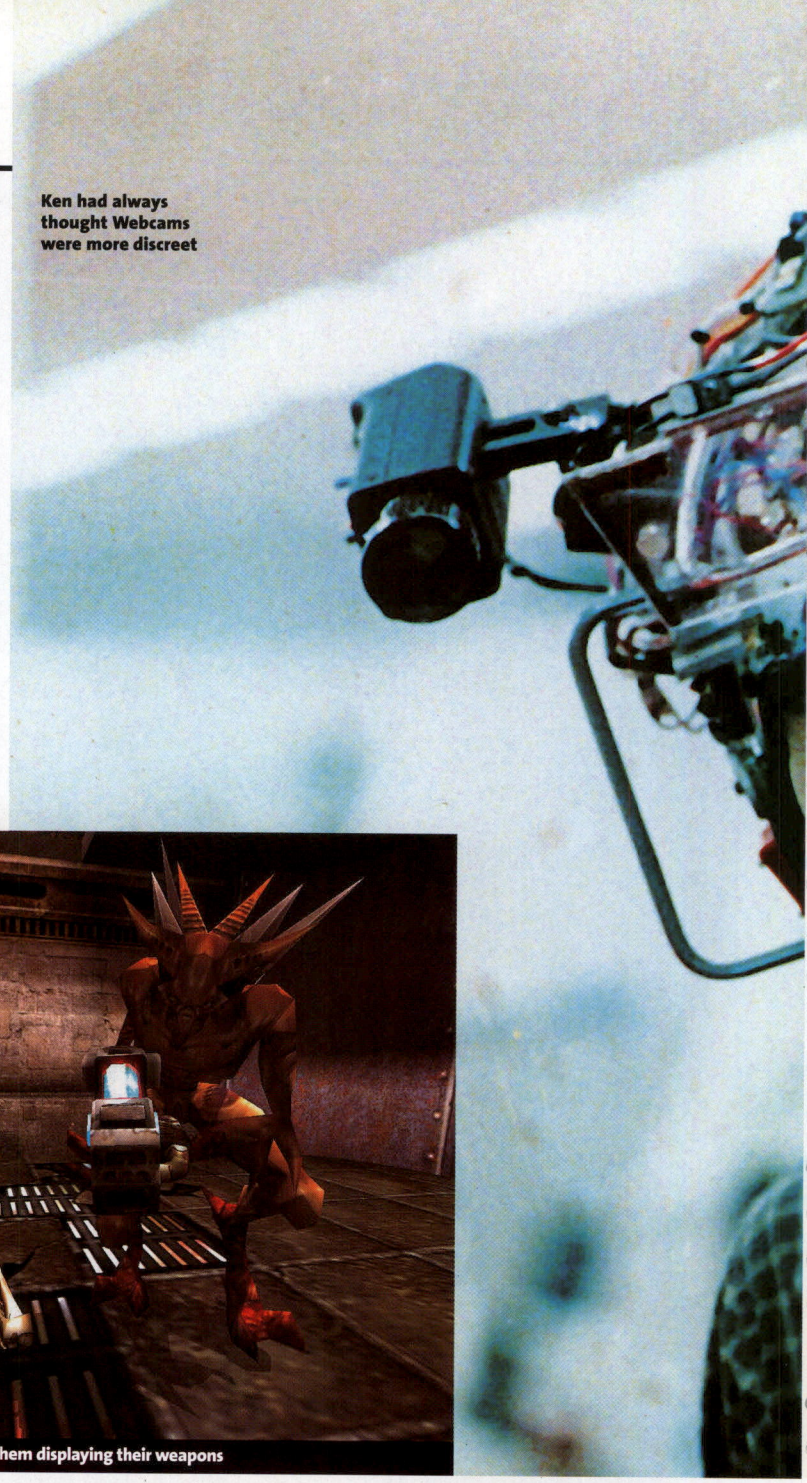
128Mb SDRAM £199.99

The single best way to improve your PC's performance is to add more memory to it. If you've only got 32Mb or 64Mb you're seriously crippling your machine's capabilities, especially with the size of Windows applications these days; add an extra 128Mb and Windows will speed up a great deal, won't need to be constantly shovelling data around on your hard disk, and will be able to keep bigger documents and more applications open at the same time. Your games will get a speed boost, too. Remember, you can never have too much RAM.

Microsoft Digital Speakers £99

A second appearance for these ultra-cool speakers. Make sure you get to hear every last scream as you frag Bots into the small hours.

Let the games begin!



Ken had always thought Webcams were more discreet

Worried about the time you spend online? Wait until gaming gets its hooks into you...

After a stuttering start, online gaming is finally beginning to take off in the UK in a big way. Playing games over the Net can be incredibly addictive, but the market has been held back by BT's prices for Internet phone calls. However, the introduction of BT's SurfTime pricing scheme means that you can now play games until your eyeballs bleed for as little as £6.99 per month for unlimited Net access at weekends (***www.btinternet.com***).

And Christmas brought the release of such software as *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament*. These are the first games to be primarily designed for online playing and are bringing thousands of new players onto the Net every month.

But if *Quake* and its gory mates aren't your cup of tea, there are plenty of other types of game being played on the Internet. You can command medieval armies or fleets of hi-tech spacecraft; race against driving fans in games like *Sega Rally*; or play golf, basketball and football against mouse-wielding sports fans all over the world. Meanwhile, those with more traditional tastes can indulge in the likes of chess, backgammon, bridge and dozens of other card and board games.

You'll be able to command medieval armies or fleets of hi-tech spacecraft

But whether you're battling with *Quake*, chess or strip poker, all online games work in the same way – they're hosted on computers known as 'servers'. To start playing, you need to have the appropriate software on your PC or Mac, then find a server hosting a game. This used to be a tricky business, but there are now several easy ways to find and join a game.

The lads' night out always ended up with them displaying their weapons

Some of the latest games now have helpful options built in that search the Internet and locate servers for you. They can also provide information such as the number of players in the game and their scores. They can even check the performance of the server to see what kind of response time you're likely to get – something vital when playing high-speed action or sports games.

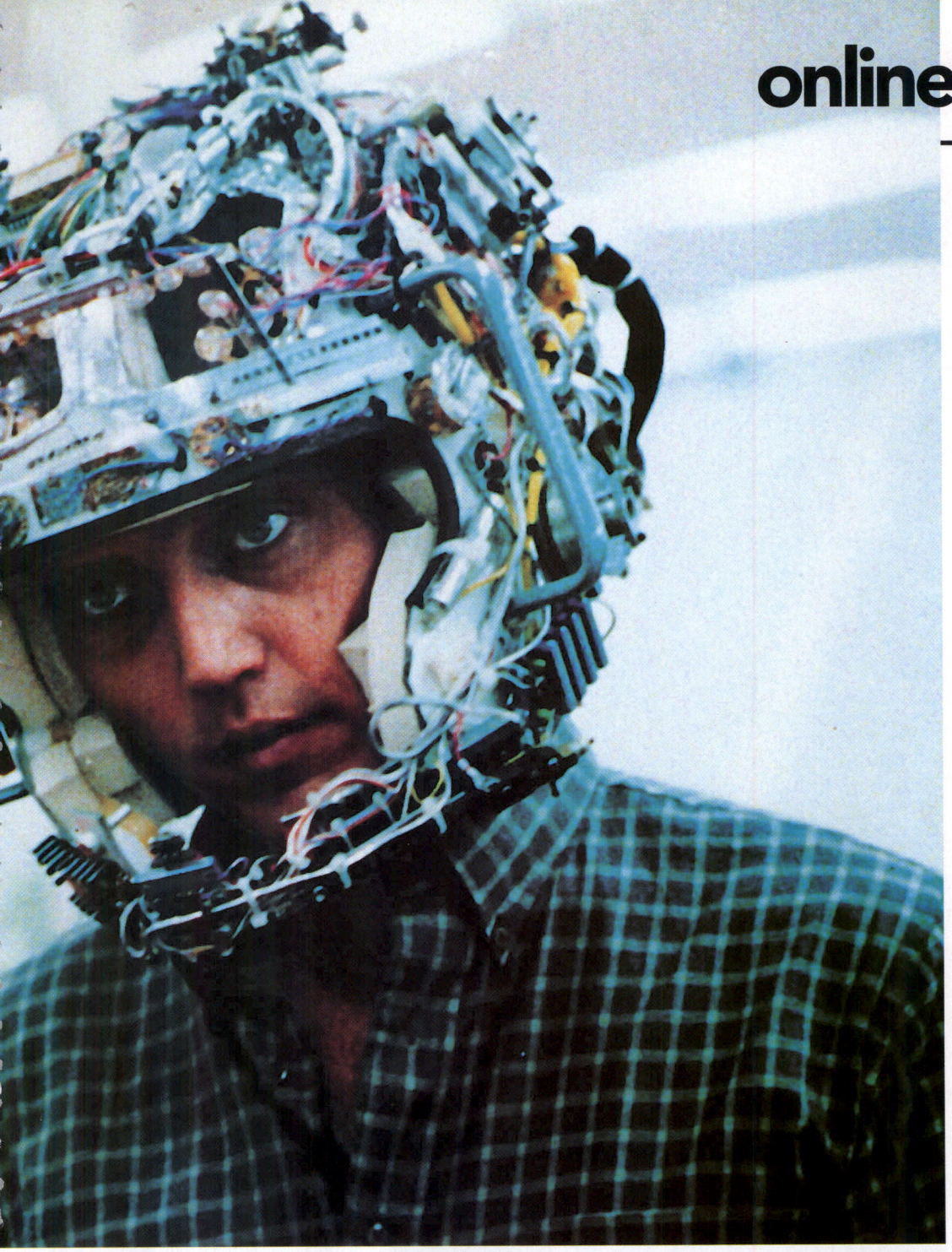
Not all games have these automatic search options, but fortunately there's a program called GameSpy that can do the searching for you. It's available free from ***www.gamespy3d.com***, and can locate servers hosting dozens of different games. Some larger portals, such as Yahoo!, have their own gaming areas, although these tend to concentrate on traditional board and card pursuits rather than the latest action offerings.

The last, and probably easiest, way of playing games online is to use one of the commercial games services on the Web. These are companies that run their own

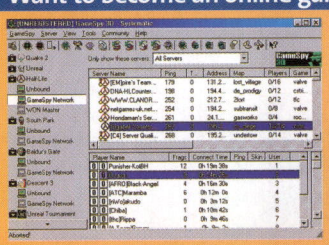
HOW TO GET ONLINE AND GAMING

The first thing to do when playing online is to choose a 'model' that will determine the appearance of your on-screen character.

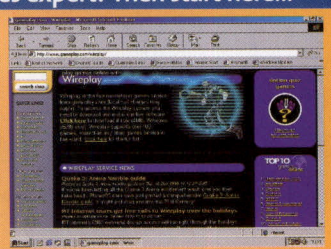
New games – such as *Quake III* shown here – have built-in options for locating game servers. They also list the 'ping' so that you can choose a server with a good response time.



Want to become an online games expert? Then start here...



If your game can't find servers by itself, you can use the free GameSpy program to locate servers running all the latest games.



Another good way for beginners to get started is to go along to an online games service such as Wireplay: *www.gameplay.com/wireplay*.

Like most games services, Wireplay has software that makes it easy to join in. Novices can specify a skill level to ensure that they start off playing other beginners.

specialised game servers, hosting a wide variety of games; they make their money through advertising or, like the UK's Gameplay, by selling games software over the Net.

These online games services are a great place for beginners to get started as they often organise games for 'newbies', where you can learn the basics of the game without being walloped by experienced players. Another bonus of these services is that they provide a load of games software that you can download for free. You won't get a copy of *Quake III* for nothing, but many card and board games will be available as free downloads. And typically you'll find demo versions of the latest games – so you can try them out before deciding whether to buy the full version.

The only disadvantage to these specialist providers is that generally they require you to download their own software in order to use the service properly. If they need updated versions of the games software as well, you might have to spend quite a while downloading and installing various bits and pieces before you can get started.

So, you've found your game server, but there's one other thing you'll have to deal with. Anyone who's ever sat twiddling their thumbs while waiting for a Web page to download knows that the Internet doesn't always work at the speed of light. It's not too much of a problem with 'turn-based' games, such as card or board games where each player takes turns to make their moves, and it doesn't affect strategy games too much either, as you generally need a bit of time to sit and think about your next action while you're playing.

LAGGING BEHIND

However, action games like *Quake* need the fastest possible response time from the game server. These games generally involve several players running around complex 3D landscapes shooting the crap out of each other. Which, of course, they're all doing at the same time – there's no orderly taking of turns when you're about to ram a rocket up someone's backside.

This means that there's a lot of data flying back and forth between your computer and the server, and if your connection isn't running efficiently you'll experience something known as 'lag'. This refers to the time-lag that occurs between pressing the movement or 'fire' buttons on your keyboard and the action actually happening on your computer screen. If the lag is very bad you will find that you simply can't respond quickly enough to compete properly.

There are three things that can cause lag – the speed of your modem, congestion on your ISP's network, and the geographical distance between you and the game server. You need the fastest modem you can get, so upgrade to a 56K model if you don't already have one. Distance is probably the next big factor, and most people in the UK will find that they get the best response from servers in the UK or France. Try to play on a server in the US you'll probably find yourself blown to bits by Yank

MAC GAMING

Mac users have traditionally been second-class citizens when it comes to games, with most big companies concentrating on PCs and consoles. However, the iMac's success has meant many games companies are producing Mac versions of games like *Quake* and *Unreal Tournament*, allowing Mac owners to play on the Net against PC players on equal terms.

Unfortunately, most games services on the Web still cater just for PC users, leaving Mac users with the problem of locating servers to play on.

Macs: not second class

But, thankfully, a hero called Scott Kevill has created GameRanger, a piece of software for Macs that can be used to locate servers running most of the main Mac games.

GameRanger has two main functions. Launching the program takes you to a chat room where you can round up a group to start a new game, and also lets you use your computer as a server, so you can host a game on your own machine. This is great for arranging a game with chums, but you do need a fast connection – the 56K modems us Brits are stuck with aren't really fast enough, so you're probably better off joining an already-running tournament.

This is where GameRanger really comes in handy. Click 'Server' and a list of servers for the game you choose is displayed, including the number of players in each and the server's 'ping', so you can find one with a good response time. GameRanger works with all the main Mac action games, and a selection of sport and card games. Scott runs GameRanger as a hobby, so download the software from his site and lend your support.

www.gameranger.com

If you try to play on a server in the US you'll probably find yourself walloped by Yanks

players getting much better response times.

So to avoid that particular embarrassment, you need a way of estimating the amount of lag that you're likely to experience before you join a game. Whenever you locate a game server you will find that the server information includes a number known as its 'ping'. The ping is measured in milliseconds and refers to the time that it takes for a signal – such as pressing the 'fire' button – to travel from your computer to the game server and back again.

If the ping is more than 300 to 350 milliseconds, forget it – you'll be running too slowly to compete effectively. Ideally, you want to find a server that has a ping of less than 200, although 200 to 250 is reasonably playable as long as all the other players have pings at about the same level.

If you can find a server that has a ping of less than 100 you'll be what's known as an LPB – 'low ping bastard'. Coming up against an LPB in a game is a bit of a bummer as their fast response times always give them the edge. But simply follow the steps outlined in these pages and you should be able to locate servers in the UK and Europe that'll be fast enough to give you a good game.

Cards: great fun

PICTURES: KOBAL

'Yes, I can read your thoughts! I... am..... a... twat'

What kit?

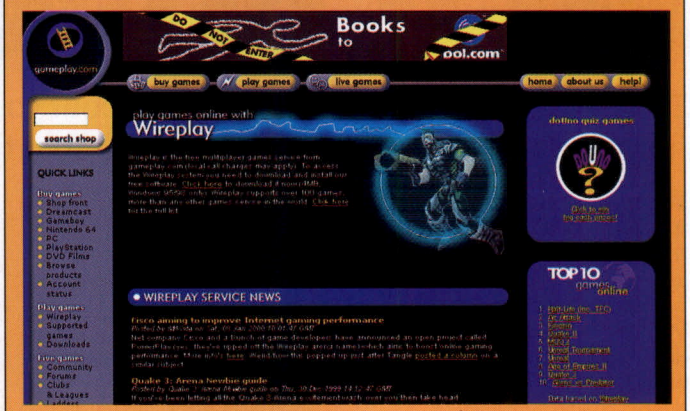
The hardware that you need to play online games depends very much on the type of game you're interested in. Traditional card and board games don't require a very powerful computer at all, so just about any PC or Mac bought in the last couple of years should do fine. Strategy games that are 'turn-based', such as *Diplomacy* or *Risk*, don't require super-fast kit either, as you've generally got plenty of time between moves.

However, you'll need a pretty beefy system if you want to play the latest, greatest 3D action games. As an absolute minimum you need a PC or Mac running at 300MHz with 64Mb of RAM and a 2Gb hard disk. Many games these days require a 3D card as well. All new Macs and iMacs include a 3D card called the Rage 128, but not all PCs do, so check this before buying. If you need to buy a new 3D card look at Creative Labs' Annihilator, the Voodoo 3 from 3DFX or the G400 from Matrox.

And, of course, you need the fastest connection you can get. At the moment this means a 56K modem, but if you're serious about gaming you might want to consider the high-speed ADSL service that BT is planning to introduce this spring.

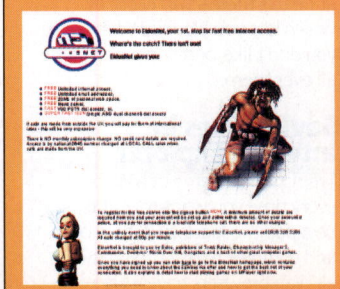
www.creative.com
www.3dfx.com
www.matrox.com

WHERE TO GAME



WIREPLAY *www.gameplay.com/wireplay*

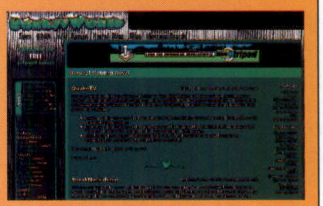
The UK's biggest online games service, Wireplay runs all sorts of games from *Quake III* to classic board games such as Gomoku. It's also a free ISP.



EIDOSNET

www.eidosnet.co.uk

Eidos, the company behind Tomb Raider, runs this free ISP service with an emphasis on games playing.



BARRYSWORLD

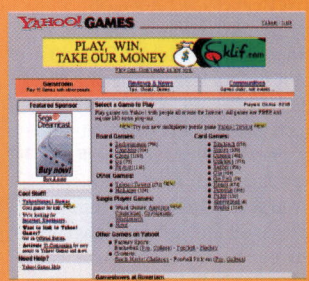
www.barrysworld.com

A popular service used mainly by experienced players. Carries news, reviews and gaming services.

MSN GAMES ZONE

zone.msn.co.uk

Extensive games site covering card, board, action and strategy games. Some of their games require a subscription fee.



YAHOO!

games.yahoo.com

Yahoo's games area includes free software to download, but mainly concentrates on traditional card and board games.

FREEVERSE.COM

www.freeverse.com

Popular games service that concentrates on card and board games. It's also one of the few services open to both Mac and PC users.

GAMESPY

www.gamespy3d.com

An alternative to commercial games services, GameSpy is a handy piece of software that can be used to locate games servers anywhere on the Internet.

Web browsers

Everything you ever wanted to know about your window to the Web, from good old reliable Netscape Navigator to the rebel browser Lynx

What do I use to explore the Web?

The software you use to look at pages on the Web is called a 'browser'. The most popular are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. If you have a PC running Windows 95 or 98, you will almost certainly have Internet Explorer already installed. However, Navigator and other browsers such as Opera run in much the same way.

What are my options?

Statistically, Internet Explorer is the most popular browser on the planet. Together with its nearest competitor, Netscape Navigator, it accounts for 97 percent of all Web page hits.

With the facilities that the two offer, it's hardly surprising that they rule the roost. Internet Explorer 5.0 is the current leader of the Internet pack. It's packed – jam-packed, in fact – with features.

Netscape Navigator 4.08 represents the only serious competition to Internet Explorer. But it still can't reach the dizzying heights of IE – in fact it's slipped so much in popularity that Web site designers now often make sure their pages look right in IE alone.

You would've thought that with the market pretty much sewn up between the big two, no-one would be foolhardy enough to attempt to write a rival browser – but there are others. Opera, for example, is a tiny little thing at 1.5Mb (compared with Netscape Communicator's 10Mb+). It's fast, but it's let down by an ugly appearance. The Opera equivalent for Macs is iCab. It has many of the excellent features of Opera, but it looks and works even better.

If you want a real rebel browser, try Lynx. It's text only, so it cuts down on download times. For children (or adults who are kids at heart), there's Surf Monkey, which lets you blow up Web pages you don't like, or gloop green paint all over them.

Saving sites in Internet Explorer

Typing in the name of a Web site every time you want to visit it can be a pain – especially if it's a long and complex name. Fortunately, all Web browsers have a way of saving the locations of sites you like, so you can revisit them without needing to retype them. In Internet Explorer these saved site addresses are called Favourites, while Netscape Navigator calls them Bookmarks.

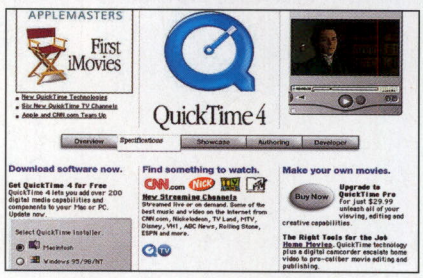
1 From the Favourites menu, choose 'Add to Favourite.' The keyboard shortcut for the move is Control D.

2 When asked whether you want to subscribe to the site, choose the 'No, just add this page to my Favourites' option. You'll see the title of the page in the 'Name' section of the site; if this is not descriptive enough for you, type a five- or six-word description of the site. Then hit OK.

3 You will now find that the site has been added to your Favourites menu. To visit the site, just click 'Favourites' and then go to the menu list and select it.

Supercharge your browser

Your basic Internet Explorer set-up comes with several 'plug-ins'. These are additional pieces of software which enable your browser to play, for example, multimedia effects. If you arrive at a site requiring a plug-in that you don't have, you'll be prompted to download and install it. The essential plug-ins you'll need to get the most from your browsing include: RealPlayer (below), which lets you watch videos or listen to music; Shockwave, for animation and sound; and QuickTime (bottom), which plays video and sound.



Installing a plug-in

1 When you visit a site requiring a plug-in, a prompt appears. Click 'Get Plug-in' and you'll be taken to the plug-in's home page.

2 Click on the link where you can 'Get' or 'Download' the plug-in.

3 Explorer will automatically put the plug-in inside the correct folder on your PC.

4 Go back to the Web site by pressing the Back button on the Explorer toolbar and enjoy it in its full glory.

Browser alternatives

Proof that there's more to browsing than Explorer or Netscape

MAC BROWSERS

BROWSER	RATING	FOR	AGAINST	DOWNLOAD FROM
ICAB	★★★★	Fast. Gets rid of irritating ad banners	Could support more features	www.icab.de
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow; somewhat unstable	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★	State-of-the-art browsing on the Mac	Can be memory-hungry	www.microsoft.com/Mac/IE/
LYNX	★★★★	Blazingly fast at fact-finding	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	www.lirmm.fr/~gutkneco/maclynx/
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★	It's almost as good as IE...	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com

PC BROWSERS

AMAYA	★★	Great for those into Net standards...	...not for those who aren't	www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html
ARACHNE	★★	It runs in DOS and is written by Czechs	A pain to set up	arachne.cz
CUSTOM BROWSER	★	Adds minimal extra customisation to IE	It's just IE with an ad in the top panel	www.custombrowser.com
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow, though not as bad as on the Mac	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★★	For the moment, the king of all browsers	Hard to fault, unless you really try	www.microsoft.com
LYNX	★★★★	The original text-only browser	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	lynx.browser.org
MOSAIC	★★★	Good for developers	Feels old. Is old. Not updated since 1996	www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/mosaic-w/
NEOPLANET	★★★★	Funky interface replacement for Explorer	Internet Explorer in new clothes	www.neoplanet.com
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★★	Wide range of features for hardcore users	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com
OPERA	★★★★	Faster than IE or Netscape	Looks absolutely horrible	www.opera.com
SURF MONKEY	★★★★★	Lots of fun – blowing up sites is great	Designed for smaller screens?	www.surfmonkey.com

*free 30-day trial version available

What all those browser buttons mean

Understanding the toolbar

BACK Clicking this button takes you back to the last page. Click it once and you'll go back one page, or hold to see the last 10

STOP If you decide that you don't want to view a page while it's loading, just hit Stop

HOME This button takes you to the page you viewed when you started your browser

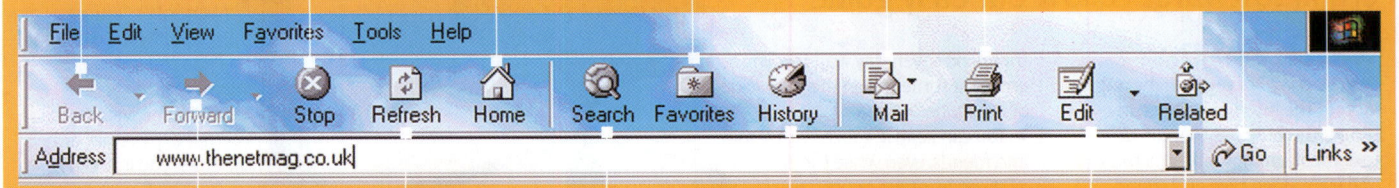
FAVOURITES Pop-up window containing a list of your Favourite sites – or you can view them from the menu

MAIL Opens your email program

PRINT Prints the page

GO When you've entered an address, hit Enter or click here to go to the site

LINKS A quick shortcut to some of your favourite sites, which you can add to



FORWARD If you've used the Back button to move back a page or two, the Forward button should take you back again

REFRESH This makes the browser redraw the page on the screen – useful if you have stopped a page from loading

SEARCH This button opens Internet Explorer's search options where you'll find short-cuts to finding what you want on the Internet

HISTORY Clicking this button produces a list of all the sites visited over the past few days or weeks – so if you found a really useful page two days ago but forgot to add it to your Favourites list, you can easily find it again by looking here

EDIT If you have a Web page editor, you can edit a Web page by clicking here

RELATED SITES Launches the Explorer 'Alexa' plug-in which provides extra search options

Viewing your browser

1 TITLE BAR
Tells you the name of the site you're visiting and the program you're currently using

2 MENU BAR
The range of options you can use while navigating the Internet, including your Favourites menu

3 IE LOGO
Contains a link to the MSN home page, in case you're completely lost

4 ADDRESS
The address of the site you're opening, including the http:// prefix

5 GO BUTTON
IE5 feature: click to go to the address you've typed in (or hit the Return key)

6 LINKS BUTTON
IE5 feature: shortcut to the 'Links' option within your Favourites folder

7 WEB SITE WINDOW
The whole page you're opening, including ads and links to other sites

8 BANNER ADVERTISEMENT
Click here to visit the service advertised in this small banner

9 INDEX
What you'll find on the site. Click on an option to enter it

10 TEXT LINKS
Move your cursor to the underlined text and you'll be able to open the relevant link by clicking on it.

11 EMAIL FEEDBACK
Most Web sites allow you to send them questions and enquiries.

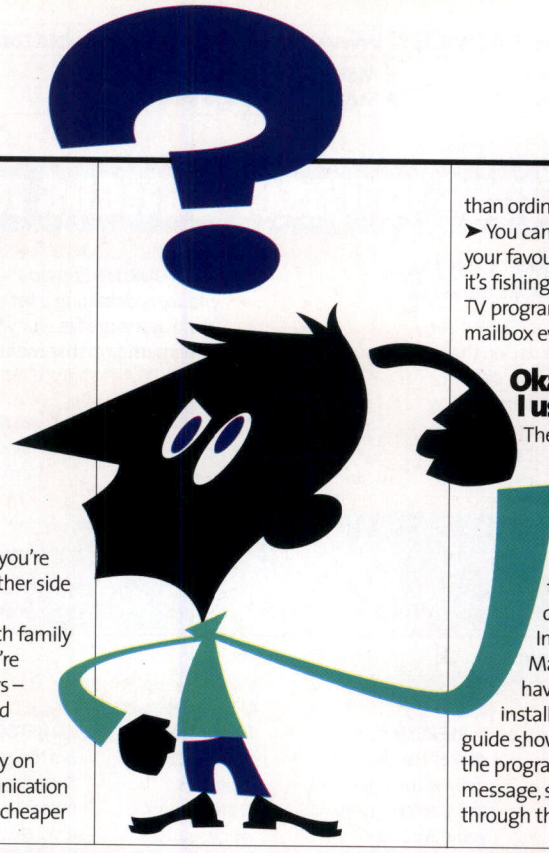
12 DOWNLOAD DATA
This space tells you what Explorer is doing – or which site it could open when your cursor passes over a link

JARGON BUSTERS

DOWNLOAD Retrieve a page or file from across the Internet
HOME PAGE The initial page of a site you see when you connect
HTTP Short for HyperText **TRANSFER PROTOCOL** The way your browser pulls in Web pages
WEB PAGE Web sites are divided up into 'pages'. Each page contains a link to another page, building up a 'web'
URL Short for Uniform Resource Locator. A technical term for a Web address
WWW Short for World Wide Web – found in addresses

Email

Not yet set up your Outlook Express email software? Follow our easy guide



What is email?

Email is a way of sending messages around the Internet. While early programs could only handle plain text, most can now carry pictures and even video clips and sound.

So why should I use it?

➤ It's a lot cheaper to email a friend than to phone them long distance.

➤ It's delivered almost instantly – there's no seven-day wait if you're emailing someone on the other side of the globe.

➤ You can keep in touch with family and friends, even while they're away on business or holidays – they can visit a cybercafé and check their mail from there.

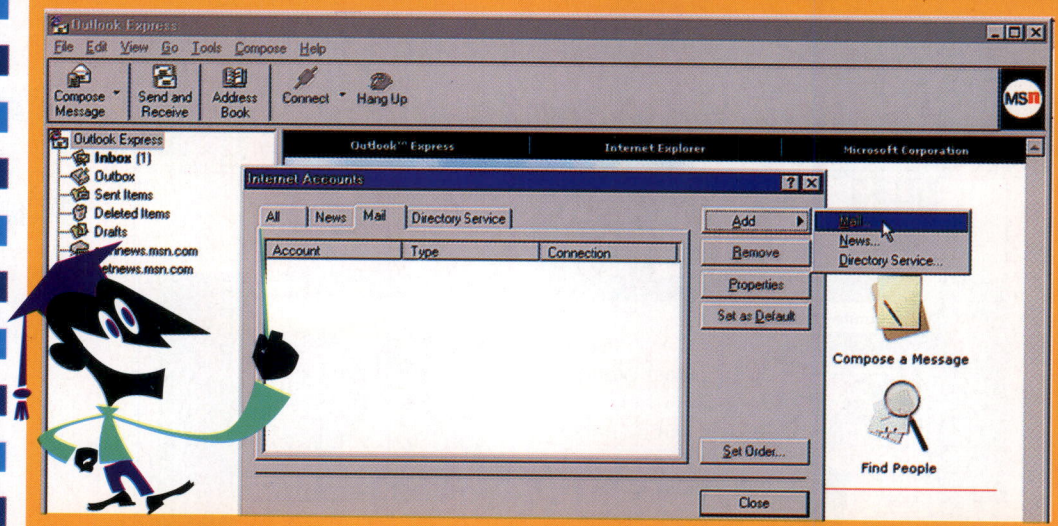
➤ Many companies now rely on email as a means of communication because it's much faster and cheaper than ordinary or 'snail mail'.

➤ You can have information on your favourite subjects – whether it's fishing, the stock market, or a TV programme – delivered to your mailbox every day.

Okay, so how do I use it?

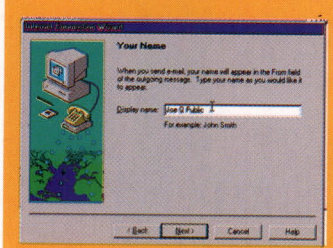
There are lots of email packages, but the one most widely used is Microsoft's Outlook Express. If you've bought a PC in the last two or three years, or you've downloaded Microsoft Internet Explorer for either Mac or PC, you'll already have Outlook Express installed. Our step-by-step guide shows you how to configure the program, create an email message, send it, and then read through the mail you've been sent.

1 Getting started with Outlook Express

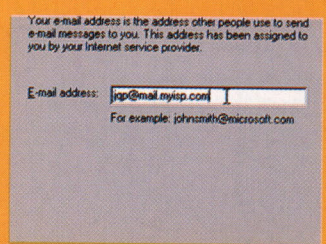


1 From the Start menu on your desktop, click Programs and then Outlook Express. If you are asked where you want it to store messages, select the pre-set or 'default' folder. The folder is kept in the Program Files folder on your hard drive.

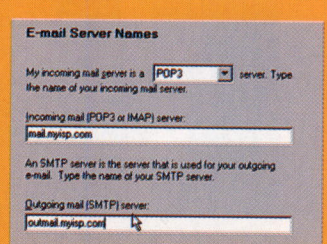
2 Once Outlook Express has loaded, go to the Accounts box from the Tools menu, and click the Mail tab shown in the picture on the left. This will show you any mail accounts you already have set up, and allows you to create a new one. For the purposes of this exercise we are going to create a new email account. Next, click Add, and select Mail.



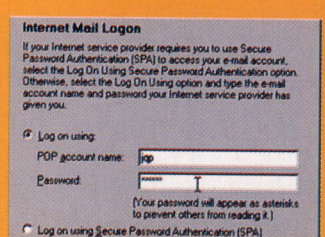
3 The Internet Connection Wizard will now guide you through the steps you need to take. First, enter your full name.



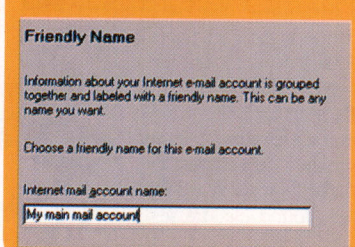
4 Type in your email address. This will have been given to you by your Internet service provider or ISP.



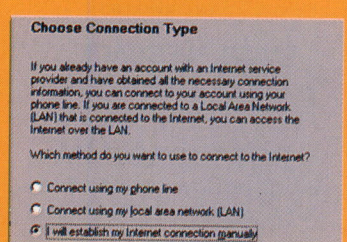
5 Enter the names of the email POP3/IMAP server in order to get incoming and outgoing mail. Call your ISP's helpline if you're unsure.



6 Type in your email address – just the part before the '@' sign – and your password. Again, your ISP should have given you these details.



7 Outlook Express asks for a 'friendly name' to give to your email account. We've called ours 'My main email account' for simplicity.



8 Outlook Express can automatically dial into your ISP for you, but it's probably best to connect manually. You can use Outlook offline, writing and managing your mail and then connect in order to send and receive messages. Choose the 'I will establish my Internet connection manually' option.

MORE EMAIL HELP AND ADVICE @ www.thenetmag.co.uk/helpbutton/

- ★ Creating an email address book
- ★ Email etiquette
- ★ Filtering your email messages
- ★ Sending pictures and files via email

BEGINNER'S TIP

Add a 'signature' to your messages. A signature is like a calling card appended to the bottom of your email message. It might contain your email address, full name and phone number. To make one, go to the Tools menu in Outlook Express, choose Options and select Stationery and click on the Signature button. Type in the signature text you want to appear at the bottom of each message.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Often, you'll want to pass a file to someone as part of your email message. This is known as 'attaching' the file, and is supported by most email packages. Remember that a large file will take longer to send. Compressing it using a shareware package like WinZip on the PC will shrink it, but the receiver the file will need a copy of the same program to re-expand it – so check before you send.

ADVANCED TIP

You can set up several different email accounts. Outlook Express will check each one for new mail when you go online. This is useful if you have separate work and personal email accounts. To add extra accounts, go to the Tools menu, select Options and click on New Account. Go through the 'Getting Started' steps again below, entering the new settings.

EMAIL OPTIONS If you don't want to use Outlook Express, try these alternatives for size

EUDORA LIGHT

www.eudora.com

A very popular, free email package. Includes lots of great features. Doesn't support reading news-groups, but copes happily with 'rich content email' – mail that includes sound, images and so on.

✔ **Lots of features**

✘ **None**

HOTMAIL

www.hotmail.com

A Web-based email program. Gives you a free email address, and can be accessed from any computer with a Web browser. Can also check email from a non-Web-based account.

✔ **Accessed from any computer**

✘ **You need to be online to read or compose mail**

EUDORA PRO 4.0

www.eudora.com

Commercial bigger brother to Eudora Light. Has all the features of Lite, but also allows you to check your mail from several different accounts easily.

✔ **Supports multiple mailboxes, spellchacker, email filtering**

✘ **It'll set you back nearly £30**

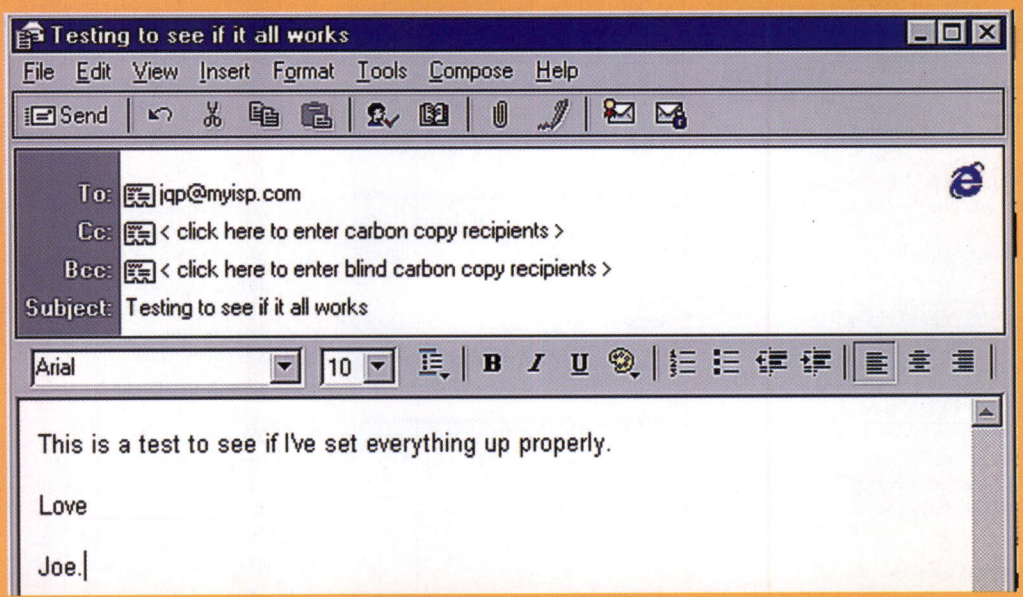
OUTLOOK 98

www.microsoft.com Commercial bigger brother to Outlook Express. Includes an address book, to-do list and calendar, all of which link very elegantly in to the email section of the program.

✔ **Integrates well with address book, diary and scheduler**

✘ **It'll set you back around £125**

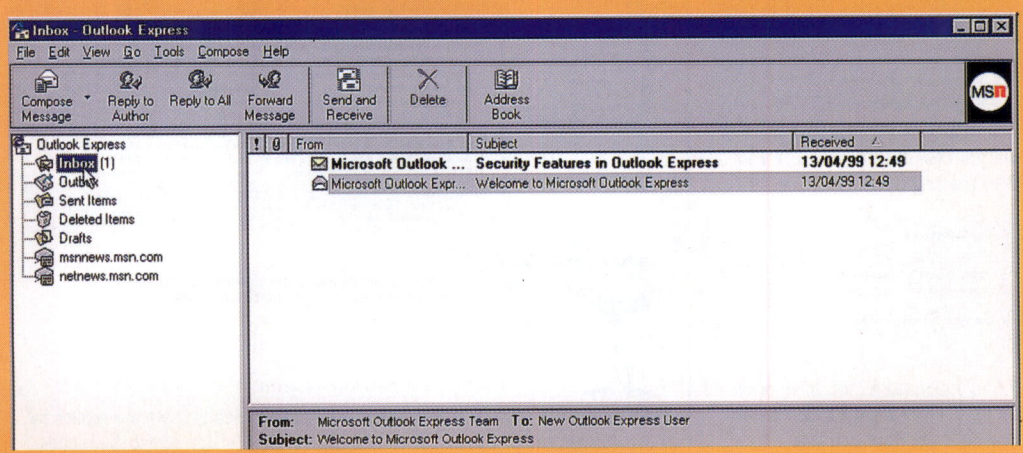
2 Composing your first email message



COMPOSING A MESSAGE

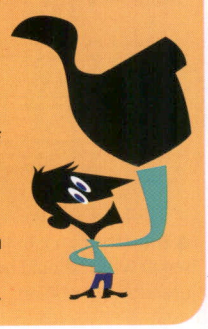
To create a message, click 'Compose Message'. If you click the small arrow just to the right, you will see that there are several pre-defined graphic message templates. But for now, just click on the button itself. Type your own email address in the 'To' field – you'll send an email to yourself to check that everything is working correctly. Enter a subject, for example 'Test Message', and in the body area just type a short message. From the File menu you can click Send to send your message now if you're online. Alternatively, if you're working offline click Send Later. This allows you to create more messages and have them ready for sending when you're ready to log on to the Net.

3 Sending, receiving & reading email



SENDING & RECEIVING MAIL

To send and receive mail, connect to the Net, then click the Send and Receive button. This will check for mail and download any new messages, at the same time sending any outgoing messages you have created. Once the program has stopped receiving mail, you can disconnect from the Net if you wish, to save phone costs. Click on In Box to the left of the screen to access the messages you have received. Click on the message to read its contents.



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- ★ Sending your first message
- ★ Newsgroup etiquette
- ★ Members-only bulletin boards
- ★ Web discussion forums

Newsgroups

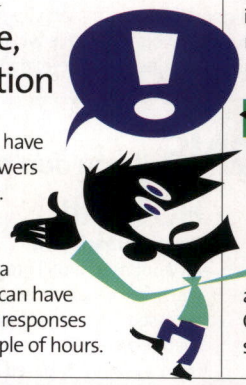
Whatever your favourite topic is, the Internet has a free, online discussion group just waiting for your participation

What is a newsgroup?

Newsgroups are one of the older services on the Internet. Each group is like a bulletin board – anyone can post messages to different newsgroups, and anyone can read the postings. There are tens of thousands of different newsgroup subjects available, so there will be one that matches your interests – whether you're looking for info on beekeeping or bookkeeping, computers or comics, sewing or sailing.

Why should I use newsgroups?

Although the Web has plenty of information on most subjects, newsgroups have detailed answers to questions. If you have a specific question on a subject, you can have half a dozen responses within a couple of hours.



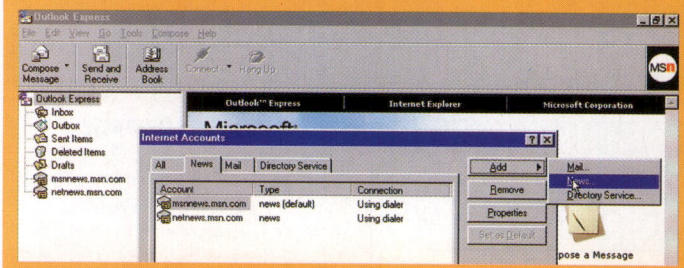
BEGINNER'S TIP

If you don't want to go to the bother of configuring Outlook Express or other newsgroup access software, visit DejaNews **www.deja.com**, a Web-based interface to newsgroups. You can read and send messages from here, all via your Web browser. Simple.

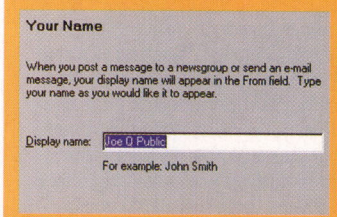
ADVANCED TIP

Your ISP will provide you with its own news server access. Mick's Place at **web.ukonline.co.uk/mick.sz/** has over 50 free-access news server addresses. To add more servers to Outlook Express, go through the setting up steps outlined below.

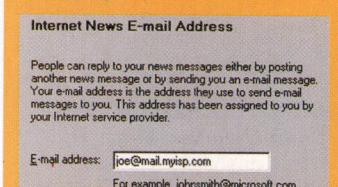
Accessing newsgroups using Outlook Express



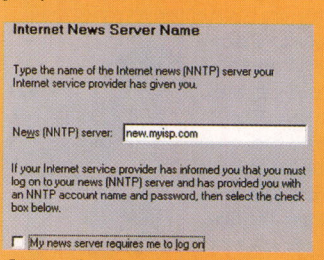
1 Go to the Accounts entry in the Tools menu, click on the News tab to list your current news accounts (if any), hit Add and choose News.



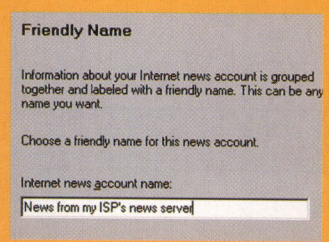
2 Type in your name. This will be displayed in any message you post to a newsgroup. Then hit Next.



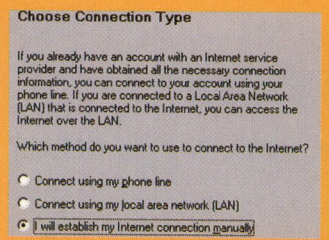
3 Type in your email address. This will be displayed in any message you post. Then click Next.



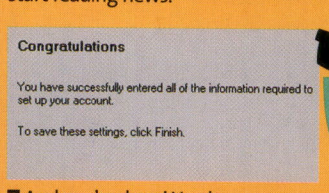
4 Enter the name of your ISP's server which should be given in your user documentation.



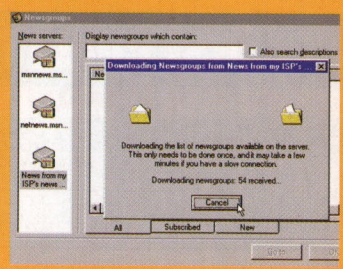
5 Give the news server a name that makes sense to you.



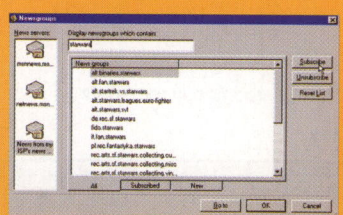
6 Tell Outlook Express that you will dial your ISP manually before you start reading news.



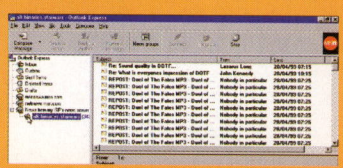
7 And you're done! You have now set up a newsgroup access account. Now let's see how to use it.



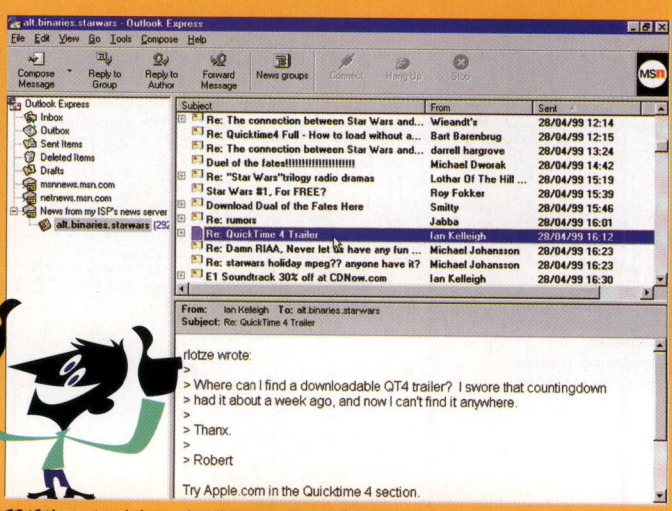
8 After hitting Close, you're asked if you want to download your ISP's list of newsgroups. When you click Yes, the list will be downloaded – so make sure you're online. This can take up to 10 minutes when you first connect to your news server because you are downloading the names of thousands of newsgroups.



9 Once all the newsgroups are downloaded, you can explore. If you want to find *Star Wars* postings, for example, type 'starwars' into the text field at the top of the window to display all newsgroups containing that word. You can subscribe to as many groups as you want.



10 To access a message inside a newsgroup, click on the subject header to read a summary. Double click the subject header and the whole message downloads appearing on the lower half of the screen.



11 If there is a '+' sign by the message header this means there are replies to this message which you can also read. Click on the '+' sign to list the replies.

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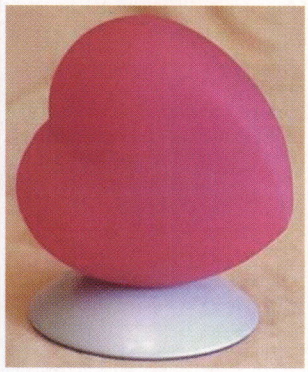

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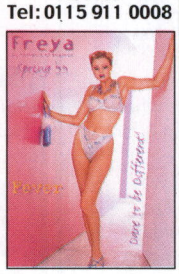

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MALCOLM McLAREN

The London Mayoral candidate and man behind the Sex Pistols waxes lyrical about the Internet

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURE: RETNA

How long have you been on the Net, and what do you use it for?
For about a year. I use it almost purely for information, looking at what other people have posted, and I use it to review papers and magazines. It's like a general library and a whole new way of gaining information.
What are your favourite sites?
I couldn't say what my favourites are – I just use it as an encyclopedic research library. If I'm merely entertaining myself then porno channels are intriguing, but much more exciting than that is the discovery of information I didn't think existed.
Your manifesto to become Mayor of London advocates a Web democracy. Is this realistic?
Yes, it is. It's not just voting but a real consensus. You could have people deciding on a variety of issues on a regular basis, such as whether to have a cycle path on a particular street. Web democracy is new and could only have come about through technology: you don't have to spend time travelling to put your paper in a box. It feels like something can be done. It creates a new kind of classlessness.
The Net is largely unaffected by Government control. Is that important?
It's hopefully a space in which you'll get information that's less censorial. I love the way that some of the popular protest in England – such as GM food and anti-corporate thinking – has been organised via the Web. It's a good weapon to have when things are so organised that you don't think you can do anything. The Internet began with one expression – 'it's free'. That was a warcry: no-one thought it could all be free, but it is. People are still living with the shock of what it means. It runs against establishment thinking.
Will the Internet eventually have to succumb to some sort of control?
I'm sure everyone's working overtime in that department, but I don't really know enough about the technology.
Is it responsible for putting power back in the hands of people in the music industry?
I think that's inevitable, because the Net breaks the bond of distribution and means it isn't in the hands of the few. It's broken the chains – taken the power away from monopolies and corporate handlers and put it back at the feet of the people.
How else has the Web altered how we live?
The Web's about to bring back a new era of romanticism: it's a human-like organ with anarchic tendencies. It can be irresponsible, and it's not as organised as we might think. It's as romantic as it is pragmatic. It's the survival kit for the 21st century.

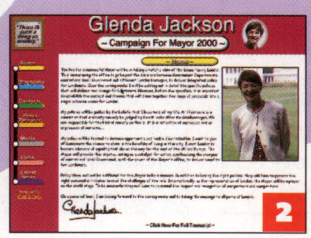
HAVING A MAYOR

If you're a candidate for Mayor of London, then a Web site is essential. Here's our guide to the leading candidates.

1 MALCOLM MCLAREN

www.malcolmmclaren.com

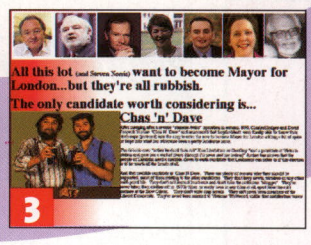
Decriminalising certain drugs, 24-hour drinking and introducing bars into libraries are just some of his ideas.



2 GLENDA JACKSON

www.glendajackson.co.uk

The official Web site has loads of pictures of Glenda interacting with the public, as a good Mayor should.



3 CHAS AND DAVE

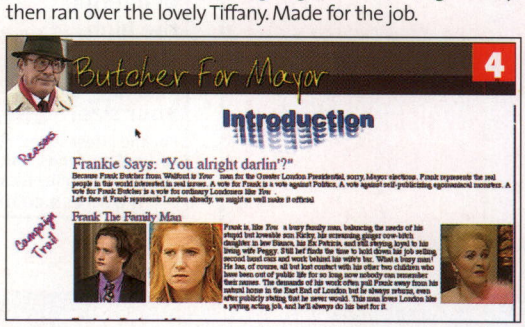
www.chasndave forlondon.org.uk

Politicians have been known to rabbit on a bit now and again, but we think they'd meet their match here.

4 FRANK BUTCHER

website.lineone.net/~wonderin/

A bloke who wanted his own garage torched, killing a tramp, then ran over the lovely Tiffany. Made for the job.



KEN LIVINGSTONE *www.livingstoneforlondon.com*

Good to see someone else having a good go at sticking to his principles and not being told what to say.

FRANK DOBSON *www.frank-dobson.org.uk*

The bearded wonder aiming to 'Unite London and not divide Labour' promises Internet connections for 80 percent of the capital's families.

SUSAN KRAMER *www.susankramer.org*

'London is a great city but it could be even greater,' says the LibDems' candidate. Stirring stuff, we're sure you'll agree.

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...and here it is.

If your idea of in-car entertainment is a suspiciously soggy 49-card pack of playing cards and a crackly old three-waveband radio with a broken on-off switch, it's time to wake up and smell the digital roses. Infotainment may be a funny word, but the in-car multimedia systems that produce it are serious pieces of kit. We're talking revolution here. And now. Right now, in fact, if the kit bears the VDO Dayton logo.

VDO Dayton is the result of Philips Car Systems' 1997 takeover by Mannesmann, Europe's leading private operator of mobile and fixed telecomms networks. VDO Dayton's first big achievement: bringing state-of-the-art navigation, communications and entertainment into your car.

All at once. And now.

Captain Ahab would have given his right leg for any of this gear. It looks utterly fab and works superbly. A TMC-enabled Dynamic Navigation function and upcoming GSM module will dump the full wonder of real-time route guidance and telematics into your grateful lap. But the best part? Ease of use. VDO Dayton does all the thinking, so you don't have to.

VDO DAYTON MS 6000 ▶
Awesomely-specced range topper is the David Beckham of car navigation. Standard DIN slot, ooze-up screen's auto-scrolling map can be mixed with pictographs in split screen mode, or presented across the full 6.5in landscape. Mates to 6-disc CD changer, boots out 45 fat watts. DSP tuner, hands-free calls with emergency function, speed warning system, and an optional TV tuner. Sadly, doesn't make the tea - but then, neither does a McLaren F1. Or Beckham.

VDO Dayton. The Car Brand.

VDO DAYTON MS 5000 ▶
World's first one-chip navigator system, with a hi-res 5.8in widescreen display that's just as fast and simple to operate as every other VDO Dayton navisys. Like pulling sudden U-turns? Not really recommended near the Arc de Triomphe, but greatly facilitated by the fitment of MS 5000's optional rear view camera. Zut alors.

◀ VDO DAYTON MS 4000
This pictogram-display unit is sharper than a Mugler suit. DSP tuner equals zero interference, optional VDO Dayton DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) receiver means absurdly rapid signal reception. 'Enjoy' a telcon with your mother-in-law in full 4 x 45 watt audio, hmm, or better still, let the MS4000's softly spoken instructions soothe you on your way.

VDO DAYTON MS 3000 ▶
The first standalone in-car navigation system, and a perfect add-on to an existing in-car audio system. Optional MT 5000 Dynamic Navigation Receiver will analyse traffic bulletin information to lead you onto the least bunged-up routes. Luxury.

VDO Dayton. The Car Brand.

▲▲ CD/CR 2100
Entry-level unit is 4x35 watts RDS tuner with CD or cassette, five Digital Sound Processor customisable sound presets, detachable front panel, telephone mute and optional remote

▲ CD/CR 2200
Step up a gear: five DSP presets plus Auto Leveller, speed-dependent volume control, telephone-in (audio), speed warning system, temperature display and 2-channel pre-amp out

The speed of sound is more than just a concept. In car audio terms, it's a target. Because fast sound is pure sound.

Digital sound is fast sound. VDO Dayton digital sound is very fast. It's very pure.

And here's the bonus feature: it sounds amazing.

Eh? Isn't that normal then? Inside a car, sadly not. Some ICE manufacturers consider full-colour front panel recreations of the Blackpool Illuminations to be at least as important as sonic fidelity. Which is a bit weird, as we Brits are well known for our pernickety ears. Watt for watt, the UK home audio industry is arguably the best in the world.

So, why do we accept less in our cars?

Good question. VDO Dayton's answer is to bring European, home quality sound into the mobile environment. And the VDO Dayton solution is based on function rather than flash. All the features are there: there's even the odd light to look at. But it's mainly aimed at your ears.

Take the Auto Equaliser. At the start of a journey it analyses a car's acoustics and calibrates the audio output to fit. Perfectly. Radio transmissions or CDs come out exactly 'right'. No more pesky volume adjustments needed, either: all VDO Dayton units automatically compensate for speed-related increases in engine and road noise. And you can programme in a speed warning to go off at a predetermined mark.

With outputs ranging from 4 x 35 watts to 1 x 460 watts, there's enough power to cover you up to obscenely high speeds. Not quite the speed of sound, perhaps. But enough to put the wind up the opposition.

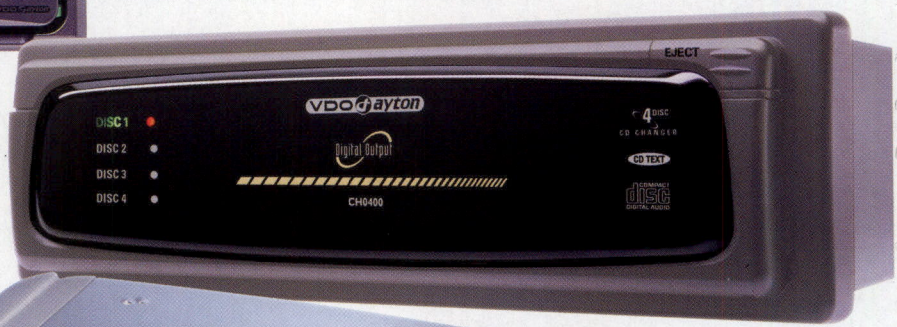
▲ 3300 All VDO Dayton units feature ultra-fast search capability, outstanding selectivity, minimal interference and outstanding clarity. But this one is a real beast. Telephone-in function stomps normal hands-free quality. Speed warning system, auto acoustic equaliser and volume leveller, temperature warning option, major league display, 4x45 watts, softkey operation, frequency analyser - suddenly, the term 'car radio' seems pitifully inadequate.

▲ CH 0600 & 1000 CD CHANGERS ► QB 1000 & 1200 SUBWOOFERS
Cut track-skip out of your life with these high-end 6- or 10-disc CD changers. Then hook your 3300 to a QB subwoofer: pure aluminium diaphragm ensures an entirely desirable combination of light weight, max rigidity and min distortion. RMS power handling 120 or 150 watts. And oh yes, the sound: heavy, tight and dry as a camel's hoof.

VDO Dayton. The Car Brand.

◀ CR/CD 3100/3200 RADIO-CASSETTE/CD
Silver finish 4x45 watt 3200 and 4x40 watt 3100 both sport DSP, temp display, speed warning system and softkeys, which can be assigned different functions according to the audio source. Preferably not tomato. 3200 has audio telephone-in function too.

CH 0400 CD CHANGER ▶
Elegant magazine system 4-disc CD changer installs in second DIN slot, glovebox, or under (not on) seat. Shares cunning CH 0600 and 1000 chassis suspension design to rule out that annoying skipping while negotiating sleepiing policemen. Which is nice.

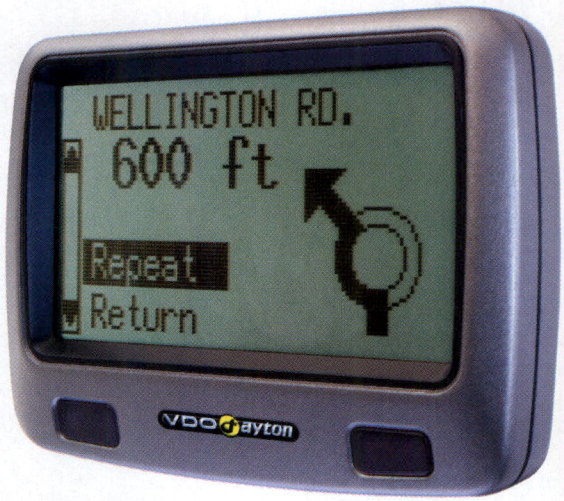


PA 4600, 4400, 2460 AMPS ▶
Bridgeable 4-, 3- and 2-channel amps: 4x150, 4x100 or 2x230 watts, and loads of sonic juice. Variable high- and low-pass filters, variable input sensitivity, cooling fan - and bank-vault build to match the performance.

◀ MS 4000 (AGAIN)
And why not? Saucy panel-down shot shows how VDO Dayton gear is engineered for life. Navigation CDs cover most of Euro road network, usually down to house numbers. Places of interest are often illustrated, with price and rating information.

◀ QM 6930 TRIAXIAL
6x9 triaxial speaker handles 60 watts RMS, 200 peak. 6-speaker range includes 90/300 watt 200mm 2030.

MS 3000 ▶
Standalone navsys grafts seamlessly onto existing audio. Display is head-up or dash-mount, remote is illuminated infra-red.



Electronic Storm

Martin Thoone, Executive Vice President of VDO Dayton's Technology Division, offers a glimpse into a dazzling in-car future

For navigation and communication there is now a perfect match between user needs and available technology at the right price. That's why VDO Dayton's technology guru **Martin Thoone** is sure we're on the brink of a revolution.

'Any application must have functionality,' says Thoone. 'It must offer real benefits, the technology must be mature and it must fulfil a need. So far, entertainment has been dominant in the car. Now we have navigation to help us reach our destination safely, and communication to allow the navigation system to be updated with real-time traffic information. It's a much more efficient use of car time.'

What might be next? 'You could easily use a navigation system's knowledge of a road network to set up an acoustic warning when drivers are entering a curve at too high a speed. Where you're inputting destinations or asking about points of interest, voice recognition makes a lot of sense. But for the car, voice recogntion hardware has to be more rugged.

'Wireless communication is developing quickly. People in the back will soon be able to listen to music on headphones, while front seat passengers use the comms function. Very soon we will have mobile Internet access, which will mean e-mail in the car.'

And later? 'In my ideal world, cars will be a combination of office and concert hall.' If Thoone is right, for 'ideal', read 'imminent'.

For more information on VDO Dayton

Tel: **0121 344 5400** or visit us on our web site **www.vdodayton.com**

This supplement was produced for VDO (UK) Ltd., Holford Drive, Holford, Birmingham B6 7UG
by MGSP, Somerset House, Somerset Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8RU

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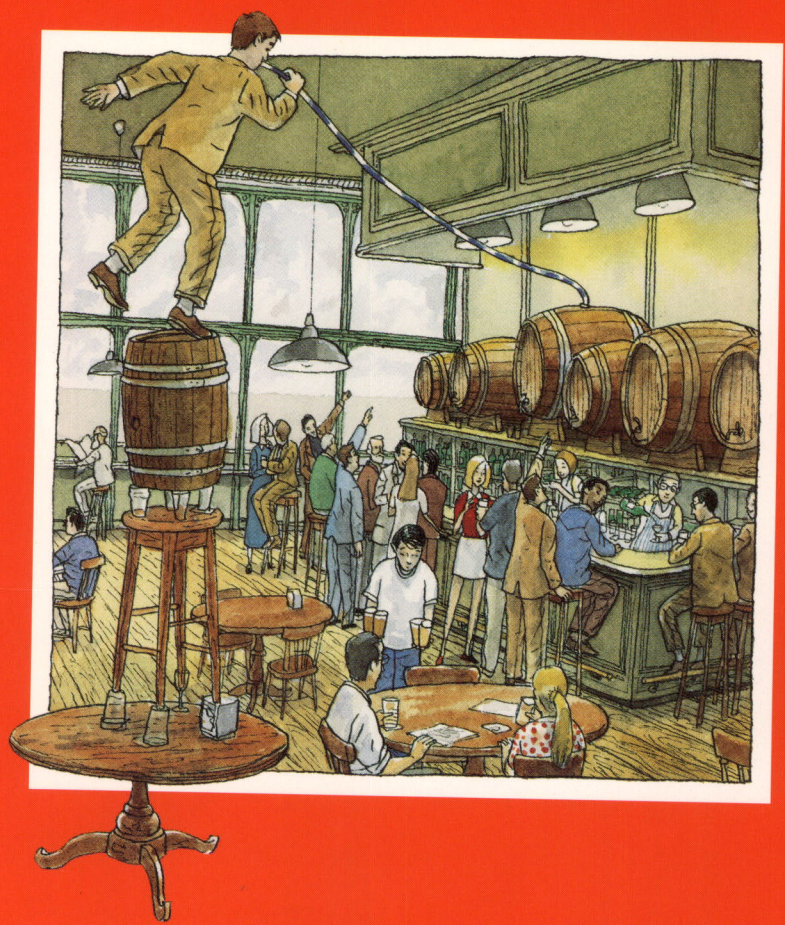

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